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OF SAINT PETER



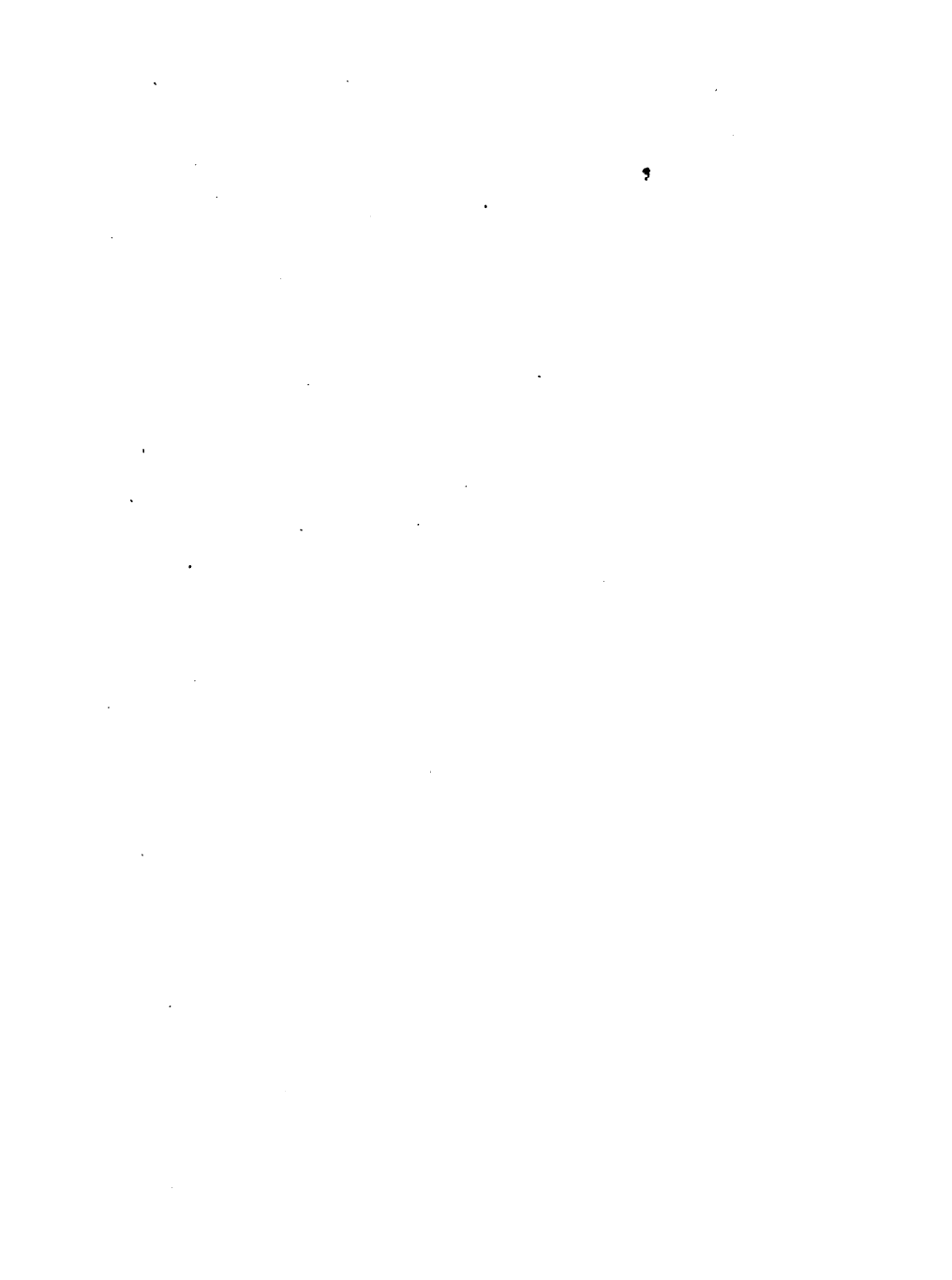
OF SAINT PETER



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THE LIGHTHOUSE OF ST. PETER.

THE
LIGHTHOUSE OF SAINT PETER:

AND
OTHER ADDRESSES.

BY
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THE
LIGHTHOUSE OF ST. PETER, &c.

I.

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF ST. PETER.

THERE is a dangerous reef of rocks in the English Channel about fourteen miles from the coast, known, in allusion to the waters always seething and swirling round it, by the name of "the Eddystone." The first attempt to build a lighthouse on these rocks was a failure. The work was of too fanciful a character to withstand the fury of such storms as often sweep the Channel; and on the night of November 26, 1702, this first lighthouse, soon after its completion, was hurled into destruction. A second was built, which lasted for fifty years, and then perished by fire. A third was afterwards

erected, and the architect and builder displayed such masterly skill that it endured the shock of storms for one hundred and twenty years, and only proved unsafe when the rock on which it stood became undermined by the sea.

For this third lighthouse much wisdom was brought to bear upon the first connection of the building with the rock of its foundation. The surface of the rock was cut in steps, and into these steps the blocks of granite were securely wedged, each stone being interlocked with the next, so that as one course rose upon another it contributed to form one mass of solid masonry. The great designer carved upon one of the courses the words, "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it." And on the topmost stone he put the words in Latin, "Praise be to God." God blessed the labour wrought in such a noble spirit, so that this lighthouse became the most famous in the world, a grand witness to the triumph of mind over matter, and a source of safety to the ships of all nations.

"Steadfast, serene, immovable, the same
Year after year, through all the silent night
Burns on for evermore that quenchless flame,
Shines on that inextinguishable light !

It sees the ocean to its bosom clasp
The rocks and sea-sand with the kiss of peace ;
It sees the wild winds lift it in their grasp,
And hold it up, and shake it like a fleece.

The startled waves leap over it ; the storm
Smites it with all the scourges of the rain,
And steadily against its solid form
Press the great shoulders of the hurricane."

Jesus Christ says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." St. Jude speaks of "building up yourselves on your most holy faith ;" and St. Peter, in his Second Epistle, gives directions for building up a godly life, which find an apt illustration and comparison in the building of the Eddystone Lighthouse.

St. Peter takes FAITH as the foundation, and lays one course of stone upon another, until the building is complete, and stands firm in stately proportions fitly framed together. The foundation is sure, but it may be undermined ; and if the work is careless, if the building is fantastic, if upon that foundation we build hay and stubble, then it will be certain ruin. But if we follow St. Peter's directions with sincere purpose, then, though the rain descended and the winds blew and beat upon that house, it will not fall.

St. Peter speaks of FAITH IN CHRIST as a precious gift, conferring on the believer great and precious promises, making him a partaker of the Divine nature. He shows that this FAITH must be the foundation on which to build up a godly life. For he teaches that Faith without works is dead; that good works must testify to its living active energy. Faith by itself belongs to the spirits of darkness, for they believe and tremble. They know Jesus Christ to have vanquished their prince: they tremble at His holy Name and infinite power; but they cannot build upon that foundation—their faith is dead and useless. So must it be with us. No one has a right to expect to inherit the kingdom of heaven who does not devote his life to building up godliness upon the foundation of Faith. Light cannot shine without the exertion of energy. For centuries the Eddystone gave no light; the foundation was there, but there was no working upon it.

We must prove that we fear God and believe in Jesus Christ by bringing forth the fruits of Faith. Christian duty is no matter of folding the hands to sleep. Life is real and earnest; the servant of Christ must be full of active energy in doing his Master's will; we must give diligence to make our calling and election sure.

St. Peter lays the strongest emphasis on the necessity of doing a great deal to secure salvation. Salvation is the free and gracious gift of God, but most assuredly it is only for those who consent to receive it in the way of God's appointment.

For the building of the Christian Lighthouse St. Peter requires, as it were, seven courses of solid masonry—one to rise above the other in true and just proportion, the last of them to be the crowning glory of Christian graces—the most excellent gift of Charity—that grace which surpasses all others, and is the main source of that Light which Christ requires us to display; being the purest reflection of His character, Who was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

St. Peter presses the importance of so building up our lives with an urgency that demands close attention. For if we so build (he says) we shall never fall. If we so build, "an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ." Very strong and striking are these words, and so urgent, that he says he must not be negligent to put us always in remembrance of them, though we know them already. He would stir us up by putting us in remembrance of them. He would do his utmost to provide that

this truth shall be kept in remembrance after his death.

So, then, it is impossible to estimate too highly the instruction he gives.

FAITH is the Rock—round which are always tossing and seething the waves of doubt and temptation and enticements to sin. Satan knows well the secret of his power and our weakness. He knows that if he can only render the foundation insecure, any building raised upon it must soon fall. His utmost efforts are therefore directed to undermine our faith. All the waves and storms at his command are brought to bear upon the rock.

But if we set ourselves always to remember God and fear Him continually, and pray always for the Holy Spirit to keep us one with God in Christ; then we are wedging the foundations of a holy life into the solid rock, and Satan cannot get the great advantage over us. He tries therefore to shake our confidence. He tries to entice us away from the faith. He does his utmost to make us forget God, to silence the voice of prayer, to blind the eyes of the soul, to make us long for sinful pleasures. He would give all the kingdoms of the world to draw us away from God; for if he can do this, he knows that we must fall.

Therefore FAITH IN GOD is the one great, precious, solid and true foundation on which every one who is to be saved must build. So much is plain and certain. We must begin by clinging fast to God, keeping Him in mind always; and by unceasing watchfulness and earnest purpose fasten our security upon the rock.

And then we must proceed to build on this foundation. St. Peter describes the order of building in the words, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith VIRTUE; and to virtue KNOWLEDGE; and to knowledge TEMPERANCE; and to temperance PATIENCE; and to patience GODLINESS; and to godliness BROTHERLY KINDNESS; and to brotherly kindness CHARITY." Those are the seven courses of masonry which must rise one above the other to make the perfect and complete building of a godly life.

VIRTUE, by its derivation, means manly strength, courage that scorns everything mean, and boldly stands up for right against wrong. It springs immediately from faith. Believing in God, we must take a bold stand on His side, fearing to offend Him; and in that fear is the strong confidence which inspires virtue.

KNOWLEDGE comes next—the wisdom of knowing what God requires of us. It follows closely upon virtue; for if we are determined fearlessly to do God's will, we shall seek earnestly to know what His will is. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" will be the first question on the lips of one who is in earnest. The knowledge of God's will must be the constant study of His servants.

Then follows the third course of the building—**TEMPERANCE**. The word means the mastery over sinful inclinations. Without this grace we cannot serve God aright. The knowledge of His will at once unfolds to us the need of mortifying our corrupt affections, of doing battle with the sins that so easily beset us. And when this duty is understood, what need is there at once of the fourth course—

PATIENCE—a holding out under grievous trial, a power to sustain the burden and heat of battle! We know the need of patience. What more heavy temptation is there than to give way?—to yield in the struggle against those evil propensities of our nature which so powerfully tend to estrange us from God? Like Moses on the hill, we soon exhaust our own natural strength—nay, it is altogether insufficient—

prayer becomes languid; we need the hands to be kept uplifted by some power from without, by the power of the Holy Spirit; for by His might only can we endure and prevail—strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

These four lower courses — VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE, TEMPERANCE, PATIENCE—in the building up of a godly life, firmly interlocked and supported on the foundation of Faith—must raise the building to a commanding height. But it is not yet completed. There are three other courses to follow, of which

GODLINESS is next in order. The word means reverential love towards God, a sacred jealousy for God's honour, which inspires our life with the continual desire to show forth His glory. What strength and reality must this grace infuse into all we undertake; so that the work which our hands find to do is done not grudgingly nor of necessity, but with cheerfulness and sincere devotion, from the love which is felt towards God!

And then, as a natural result of love towards God, follows the fulfilment of that other commandment like unto it, namely, that we love our neighbour

as ourself. This is the sixth course of the building—

BROTHERLY KINDNESS.

And last of all, the crowning grace which renders complete the Lighthouse of a Christian life—

CHARITY—the nearest imitation of the character of Jesus Christ, the grace which never faileth, which is the glory of the Christian in his life, the victory that overcometh in his death, the one abiding supreme excellence destined to attain its perfection throughout eternity in the kingdom of heaven and in the presence of God. CHARITY is the last course of the building. Upon it is inscribed, “Praise to God.” From its towering height shines forth the radiance of Christ-like beauty: in its exercise is fulfilled Christ’s command, “Let your light shine before men.”

This is a fair picture of a Christian life drawn for us by the hand of St. Peter, and he holds out a rich reward promised to those who press forward in the work of building it up. “For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. If ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered

unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE, TEMPERANCE, PATIENCE, GODLINESS, BROTHERLY KINDNESS, CHARITY—all following in ordered sequence, based upon Faith, and interlocked by the Holy Spirit; they form the edifice of a godly life. These graces prevent our being barren and unfruitful—nay, they minister abundantly to us an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Let us pray God for grace so to build upon the rock of Faith. Let us make Him the Master-Builder of our lives, for, "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it." In our own strength we can do nothing; but He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." St. Peter himself fell through grievous weakness, notwithstanding his Lord's warning and prayer that his faith might not fail. But he turned and repented, and after he was converted he strengthened his brethren. For the strengthening and edification of Christians in all time he wrote the passage we have been considering. May God grant that he shall not have written unavailing words for us; but that we may so constantly keep them in mind that our life on earth may be built up as a

glorious Lighthouse, a temple and fit dwelling-place for the Holy Ghost—that God may see us always diligent to make our calling and election sure—that so an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

II.

MAN'S DEVICES AND GOD'S COUNSEL.

It is impressive to look towards London from the Surrey hills on a cloudy night. A lurid glare floats over the horizon, caused by the reflection of many thousand lamps, each in itself insignificant; but they combine to spread a shroud of light visible for miles. It tells of the restless agitation of men sustained by night as well as day. It tells of the unceasing strain of human energy diffused through innumerable channels; of anxious brows and fevered brains; of busy hands toiling in the great labour of life. It speaks of the endless struggle for existence—the worship of wealth—the conflict with poverty. It represents the schemes, hopes, ambitions, the dreams of success, the despair of failure, the sorrows and pleasures, the work of God and the work of Satan, as connected with millions of men and women. It tells the truth

of Solomon's words, "There are many devices in a man's heart."

London, more than any other city, illustrates the force of those words. Being the wealthiest and most populous and busiest of all commercial centres, London claims by hundreds of thousands those who are ready to dare all things, to sacrifice health of body and peace of mind, to endure (like St. Paul in the cause of Christ) perils from shipwreck, from journeyings often; weariness and painfulness, watchings often; hunger and thirst, fastings often—who are willing to endure all things in devotion to the absorbing interests connected with the busy devisings of the human heart.

Over all that restless turmoil hovers, like the enshrouding canopy of lurid darkness, the concluding truth of the verse, "Nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

The vision of night brooding over London is profoundly impressive. We seem almost to hear the stir of the mighty city, and see its inhabitants swarming to and fro in the streets, each bent on his several purpose—theatres thronged, temples of Baal crowded with worshippers, poverty and wealth, noble intent and guilty design—the worship of God and the worship of Satan intermingling in such an intri-

cate labyrinth that none can unravel its mazes. It is a solemn thought, overpowering in its vast extent. As David sang of the marching armies of the heavens and the recurrence of day and night, so may we say of the distant imagery of midnight London, "There is neither speech nor language, but the voice is heard." For in reality stillness reigns, broken only by the breath of a wind among the elms or the distant noise of wheels. The absence of sound is impressive. It speaks of the majesty of silence which characterises God's dealings with men. It is the contrast between the fever and heat of man's disquietude and the breadth of God's silent all-embracing control—between the incessant agitation of the many devices in a man's heart and the counsel of the Lord standing firm in spite of all.

From the ruins of cities once famous, from the decay of empires once powerful, from the tombs of kings and mighty men, comes a melancholy echo of the words, "Man disquieteth himself in vain: he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them." All history bears witness to the vanity of things temporal. As the flower of grass man passes away; he fades away and is forgotten. He frets himself for a little while, and in a moment he is cut down and all his thoughts perish. Yet meantime,

despite the vanity, there is an aspect of reality. Generations pass away, but they leave impressions on the sands of time. Each has a contribution to make to the sum of human knowledge; and so, as in the body of a growing man, amid the waste and decay of parts there is evident increase of the whole.

These considerations lead up directly to Advent thoughts. Seeing that the seal of frailty and decay is set upon us; that death, with all its attributes, is our heritage; that the creature in his noblest endowments is made subject to vanity—there is a strong probability discernible from the very circumstances which environ us, that the stage upon which the drama of mortality is being enacted may itself be doomed eventually to succumb to the same inexorable law. Experience declares the conviction that the things which are seen are temporal. We see the whole creation groaning and travailing together. We know that God has already re-arranged the condition of things upon this earth by violent catastrophes—upheaving mountains, submerging continents, altering climates, supplanting orders of animal life. Nature has been advancing from the lower to the higher grades of development. There has never been a standstill. And there is strong

evidence that the present condition is not final, that the law of progress is still effective. Knowledge is steadily advancing; discoveries and inventions are extending the dominion of mankind in subduing the earth. Each century is marked by some startling increase, so that it is impossible to foresee the limit at which it will be said of knowledge, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." In countless ways the many devices of man's heart have been crowned with glory and power: so truly did the Greek poet exclaim, "Many are the things of wonder, and nought more wondrous than man." Thus are we moving on towards the fulfilment of the Angel's words, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz, whose body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. We hear him making known the counsel of the Lord when he marked the time of the end by the significant evidence, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

The Advent message comes to us with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God. Mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, by the Lord and His apostles, let us remember that the Day of Judgment will come

suddenly as a thief in the night. It will take men by surprise. True, the outward aspect of things beforehand will have been alarming. There will have been distress of nations with perplexity, natural convulsions and terrors; but the world soon gets accustomed to these things. They pass and are forgotten; and it is probable that the premonitory warnings of the Lord's coming will be scarcely noticed by the generality of mankind. Things that do not closely concern us are scarcely heeded. How little are we affected by the great war between France and Germany! Who troubles his mind about the revolutionary influences which threaten so widely to disintegrate society? Who remembers that awful calamity of 1876, when the Indian Sea burst over the low-lying coasts of Bengal and overwhelmed with sudden destruction nearly five hundred thousand human beings? Even so; in spite of the Lord's warning that fearful sights and occurrences will anticipate the approach of the end, we may be sure that in the very midst of them—when the day is nigh, even at the doors—the world generally will no more expect it than at other times. Men are too deeply preoccupied with the many devices of their own hearts, to be keenly alive to the pressing *necessity* of the counsel of the Lord.

Let the Advent warning ring in our ears with solemn appeal. Let us, by prayer unceasing and strong crying unto the Lord, prepare our hearts to meet Him. "For the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

This is pre-eminently one of the counsels of the Lord—a secret existing with the Almighty; for of the times and seasons knoweth no man; no, not the angels. And the Lord is not slack concerning His promise. Though things continue the same, it is only the narrow scope of human vision that founds an argument on that continuance. To Him who sees all things, and declareth the end from the beginning, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word shall not pass away. Let us look forward to the day of Christ with joyful anticipations, like the saints of the Old Testament, seeing the promises and "greeting them from afar;" so that the many devices of our hearts may

be harmonised into unity with the counsel of the Lord.

For faith in the Advent prophecies of God's Word should exercise a constraining influence over our daily conversation. St. Peter says, "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?" St. Paul represents the whole creation as waiting "with outstretched neck" for its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. And shall not we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit wait for the redemption of the body—the realisation of glory so transcendent, that in comparison with it the sufferings of this present time will not be worthy of consideration? St. John cries, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope purifieth himself even as He is pure." Such is the influence which Advent thoughts should exercise upon our hearts, constraining us to holy conversation and godliness. Let us accept the full assurance of

hope, and look forward to its fulfilment with unswerving faith.

"There are many devices in a man's heart ; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." It is possible for the devices of each heart to be at variance or in unison with the counsel of the Lord. We may be provoking the long-sufferance of God, or hastening the advent of His kingdom. It is but a little while, and He that cometh shall come, and will not tarry. The night is far spent—the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let our conversation be in heaven ; let us walk honestly, as in the day ; let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us ; let us run, as in presence of that great cloud of witnesses who themselves have run the race and won the prize, pressing forward towards the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. It is only thus that we can have peace. We must be able to say with fervent truth, "I nightly pitch my moving tent a day's march nearer home." We must look to it that each day finds us with loins girt and lamps burning, in active service of the Master, ready for the summons which must come to each soul either among the quick or dead.

And thus, upheld by faith, nerved with patience to endure, we may go on with joyful confidence, in humble assurance that the Day of the Lord shall not overtake us suddenly, but that, whether we live, we shall live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we shall die unto the Lord ; that whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

III.

A COMPARISON FOR SEPTUAGESIMA.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY—the 70th day before Easter—has for its morning lessons the Account of Creation, and the Vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem in its future glory. The Church must have some special object in selecting these two chapters to be read side by side. It is evidently intended that some *comparison* should be drawn between them. They are pre-eminently records “given to us by God, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”

To-day we hear, as it were, the first tidings of Easter—that gladdest season of the year, both by the joy that is set before us in the message CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD; and also by the delightful prospects of the spring-time in which it comes. To-day we hear for the first time that Easter is near; and as a tribute of praise to the Most Holy Name

of the Eternal Son of God, we read of His great glory in *creating* the Universe, and in ransoming from death, and *creating anew* fallen humanity.

A verse from St. Paul's Epistles (1 Cor. ii. 13) suggests a way of connecting these two thoughts. "We speak the things that are freely given to us by God, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

No book that ever appeared has been so "freely given" to the world as the Bible. It has been specially guarded and preserved by God. Look at the OLD TESTAMENT: the Law and the Prophets have always been held by the Jews in the deepest reverence. They are read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-day, just as they were when Jesus lived visibly among men; and although Christians and Jews have the widest difference in religion, yet Christians are indebted to Jews for the one-half of the Bible. The NEW TESTAMENT has been preserved by manuscripts—copies of the original writings, executed with patient labour by the hands of devout men. It was also translated from the earliest times into many different languages. Thousands of these manuscripts and translations exist. And more than this—almost every verse of the New Testament is

found *quoted* in the writings of the Fathers of the Church; so that if all the manuscripts and translations were to be destroyed, it would be almost possible to reconstruct the whole of the New Testament from authentic sources. We may well be struck with admiration at the wonderful precautions which God in His wisdom has taken to preserve the Bible and publish it to the world. No other book can put forth any pretension to boast such great things. The writings of Greek and Roman historians and poets can claim perhaps five or six manuscript copies apiece; many of them have only one or two.

Truly the Bible has been "freely given" by God to men: it would be impossible to imagine greater freedom in the gift. Need we wonder that men should feel the deepest reverence and love for it?

God's Word is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. Its great purpose is TO BRING MEN TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST; and therefore JESUS CHRIST is the centre round which all its teaching revolves. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; Who at last will triumph over every opposition, and "receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages shall serve Him. His do-

minion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

The Bible opens with the magnificent account of creation. The first verse tells how God "in the beginning" formed the Universe. Then follows an interval of ages that no man can estimate; and Moses, under divine inspiration, describes in a series of pictures the various episodes by which God perfected this earth and peopled it with living things. This description bears witness to itself that it is given "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." We find in the ancient writings of heathen sages, who knew nothing of this first chapter of Genesis, many attempts to account for the existence of the heavens and earth—attempts which represent the highest results of man's wisdom at the time. Some asserted that the world itself was God, and so could of its own accord bring forth trees and animals. Some said that it existed from all eternity. The Stoics maintained that it was made by Fate or Necessity; the Epicureans taught that it arose from the "fortuitous concourse of atoms," which means that the world grew from small portions of matter coming together and arranging themselves by chance.

Others said that the angels made it, or that it was evolved by powers developed in itself. There are plenty of strange ideas to be found in the writings of wise men to account for creation. **It was** such a stupendous reality, that **human** intelligence could not remain silent **upon** the subject.

But **all such** theories are conceived "in words which man's wisdom teacheth," and consequently it is not to be wondered that they have taken but small hold upon the minds of men. We read them as interesting records of what men can think out for themselves by the unaided power of reason.

In the first chapter of Genesis we find the only account of Creation which can claim for itself the honour of being given in "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." All the other divers explanations have had to give way before the light and increase of knowledge. The account in Genesis can alone stand the crucial test of geology. Given to the world thousands of years before heathen philosophers elaborated their schemes and theories, it furnishes a most valuable re-assurance for believing the Bible. We can lean upon the Mosaic record as upon a mighty rock which no power of human wisdom shall ever shake. There is a repose about this thought which brings comfort to the soul.

JESUS CHRIST, One with the Father, Who lived and died and rose again—*created* the heavens and the earth. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." JESUS CHRIST, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, *creates us anew*, and makes us meet partakers of the glory to be revealed in the *new heavens* and the *new earth*.

If we compare these spiritual things, we shall see beautiful harmonies between the Old and the New Creation.

The earth was originally a molten fiery globe revolving round the sun, when the oceans and seas must have been suspended as steamy vapours wrapping it in impenetrable mists. Left to itself, this fiery globe would gradually cool, and the steam-clouds would condense as water on its hardened surface.

Such did Moses first see it in his vision—a shapeless empty waste, covered with water and shrouded in the thickest misty darkness. Then "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;" and God said, "Let there be Light!" and there was Light. The influence of *the Sun not yet seen* prevailed, as the condensation went on, to shed a glimmer of faint light over the watery waste.

And by degrees, as the atmosphere further cleared, the *firmament* of heaven came to view.

The crust of the earth, as the process of cooling continued, now contracted and upheaved. The mountains rose up and stood out above the waters, to be soon clothed with vegetation.

And on the fourth day, for the first time, in a heaven comparatively cloudless, the Sun rose and shone forth in all the majesty of his splendour over the earth, beautified with grassy plains and waving forests. What a glorious morning must that have been—though no human eyes were there to admire it!

Now think of the NEW CREATION, which began after Adam's banishment from Paradise. How soon is it written, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." So soon did the *darkness* of evil encompass the earth; and it was overwhelmed by the *waters* of the flood.

Then, over the dark waters the Spirit of God brooded. A gleam of *light*, reflected from Him Who is the Light of the World, the Sun of Righteousness, illuminated the darkness. The *promise of His coming*, breathed in Eden, more distinctly told in

the utterances of the prophets, was seen and greeted from afar by the holy men of old. Dark sayings, read only by faith, announced beforehand the coming of Jesus Christ—just as the first gleams of light pointed to the existence of the Sun not seen as yet.

Meantime the kingdom of God's church was acquiring more settled shape. The *fruits* of the Holy Spirit were known upon the *trees* of God's planting: and in the fulness of time JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN into the world.

Then was the morning of the fourth day. The Sun of Righteousness arose—the Day-spring from on high visited us; “to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

As with the Sun appeared also the Moon and the Stars on the grand fourth day of Creation—so side by side with the Saviour appeared John the Baptist and the Holy Apostles, those great preachers of the Gospel, of whom the words may be quoted, “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as *the stars* for ever and ever.”

Then, on the fifth and sixth days of Creation,

when the Sun could exert unrestricted sway, living creatures and MAN, the crowning work, were introduced. Even so, under the full power of Christ's Presence—Who, though soon removed from actual sight, is yet with us always even unto the end of the world—His Church expanded into richer life; and MAN, created anew, restored, forgiven, and accepted of God, proclaimed the crowning work of Redemption.

And now "there remaineth a REST for the people of God"—the Rest of an eternal Sabbath.

Such a "comparison of spiritual things with spiritual" puts before us beautiful harmonies, easy to understand, full of grace and truth. We look forward to that REST. We should all enjoy the full assurance of the hope of attaining it. When the great work shall have been accomplished, and all the elect shall have been gathered in, then shall God "see that it is very good." For everything that can offend will be put away. "The tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying;

neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things will have passed away."

Unto which eternal REST may God bring us all, through the atoning love of our CREATOR and REDEEMER, JESUS CHRIST.

IV.

THE TWO VOLUMES OF THE ONE BOOK.

THERE is an under-current of thought expressed in Job's appreciation of the Divine Majesty, which appeals to the Christian's heart specially during Lent. Humiliation and self-abasement call forth an acknowledgment of God's greatness. Whatever varieties of opinion we may hold about the requirements of this season, still the fact that the Church appoints it to be observed with special prayer and fasting must influence us all. It must cast a sombre shadow over the soul, and tone down the predominant colouring of every thoughtful heart. So that, *now*, more than at other times, we are conformed to one spiritual tone. We are brought to humble ourselves under the mighty power of God. We are more closely touched by conscious weakness, and moved to draw nigh to God, that He may draw nigh to us. Impressed with a sense of

our own unworthiness, we are more disposed to sympathise with others.

The *power of adversity* to bring man's soul to God, is emphatically declared in the history of Job. That history gives a deep insight into the proper influence of divine chastisement. God deals with men differently, according to His inscrutable wisdom. On some He lays His hand heavily with sore affliction; on others lightly with gentle encouragement. His goodness and mercy are boundless in either case. He knows and employs the best means to win us to Himself, and our faith in His wisdom must not be shaken by any apparent discrepancies in His dealings with men.

But examples of affliction and prosperity may affect us differently. Those who have been led gently by the Lord all their life through; who have seemed to glide right up to the valley of the shadow by an easy and unruffled voyage over waves of a summer sea—these may doubtless have enjoyed blessed communion with God, and be bright examples of Christian excellence. But, having tasted little of the cup of bitterness, they can hardly speak to us with the same authority as those whom God has seen fit to visit with heavy affliction.

It is overwhelming affliction which convinces

man of his absolute helplessness, and makes him fly for refuge to God ; and leads him to be thoughtful about the great mysteries of God's providence. And when affliction thus succeeds in carrying out God's purpose, how powerfully does the example appeal to our souls ! How do we reverence the hoary head that has bowed for long years in submission to the yoke of sorrow ! How do we reverence those who have been thus chastened and corrected, but not given over unto death ; who have learnt and not rejected the stern discipline, resolved though He slay them to trust Him !

Such examples are of priceless value to us. We hang upon the words of advice and warning which fall from the lips of those who have come out of great tribulation. We feel confidence in their counsel. The secret of entire trust is the conviction of helplessness. Those who have been dashed down from prosperity, who have lost the best-beloved, who have had the choicest earthly joys wrenched from them, whose life has been a protracted sickness ; these have learnt from bitter experience that *God is their only consolation*. The iron has entered into their soul, and branded that truth upon their seared hearts ; and so, whether living or dead they yet speak, and their voice com-

mands with fervid eloquence the Faith which God approves.

This is eminently exemplified in the history of Job.

Overwhelmed at first by the crushing burden of his afflictions, he cries with desperate agony for death—cursing the day that gave him birth. But when the paroxysms of despair abate, a calmer state succeeds. He acknowledges God's justice. He renounces his former arrogance. He humbles his soul in the dust, and emerges from the depth of his distress into the serenity of hope. Then does he commune with his heart, and ponder upon the mystery and majesty of God, delighting to exercise his mind in searching after God. Job answered and said : "The realms of death, the abyss of Hades, are open before Him ; He has balanced the world in space ; He stores up the rain in clouds ; He veils His glory in the clouds ; He shakes the mountains ; He cleaves the ocean. These are the skirts (or edges) of His ways ; how little a whisper of them is heard ! the full thunder of His ways who can understand ? "

RELIGION has a two-fold aspect, NATURAL and REVEALED. Both should bring precious comfort to

our souls, as they did to Job. They should be joined hand in hand—not severed or opposed. Any tendency to dis-unite them, or to think them mutually antagonistic, is to be deplored. How strange that it should ever be thought necessary to *reconcile* them, or effect some sort of *compromise* between them! There seems to be a sort of tacit understanding that the one aspect must not intrude upon the other; that ministers of Christ may only handle the one, students of science the other. Each side professes itself anxious to spread TRUTH; but they must work apart, each regarding the other with covert suspicion. They resemble two rival companies, each anxious to monopolise the contract for illuminating a town upon different principles.

Surely this is a lamentable condition of things. Nothing can well be imagined more disastrous to the cause of Christ, or more discouraging to the progress of truth. Probably your circle of acquaintance includes some whom you respect as men of high culture and intellect, who are quick to read the scientific books of the day, and study with interest every question of modern enquiry; men, who outwardly make profession of Christianity, but who do not in their heart reverence the Bible as God's Revelation to man—either doubting its

inspiration, or accepting part and rejecting the rest—luke-warm or double-minded on the subject of Salvation through Jesus Christ. God only knows how many noble minds answer to this description.

It is not a logical consequence but a melancholy perversion, that the study of Science should ever estrange a heart from God. It is not an unholy curiosity which prompts men to probe the deep secrets of Nature; nor was Christianity intended only for those who are content like cattle to feed with downward gaze, never lifting their eyes to contemplate the wonders of creation. It is a slur upon the enlightenment of the age, a stumbling-block to the cause of God and truth, that scientific research should ever tend to draw away noble intellects into scepticism and infidelity. The duty lies plain before ministers of God and stewards of the mysteries of Christ, to reclaim and establish such—to take the initiative in winning them back, by studying their objections, sympathising with their doubts, showing interest in the grand results of their work; not appearing unconcerned, or assuming credit for superior wisdom, and so giving the adversary occasion to deride and despise us as fools.

The blessed Gospel-message is, that CHRIST HAS RECONCILED US TO GOD. Can we not join hands with the Students of Science in *coming to God*? Why should there not be mutual encouragement in learning all that can be learnt of Him, from the WORDS of Divine Revelation and the WORKS of Divine Wisdom; and so be united action in the cause of TRUTH, which by its very nature must be *one* and indissoluble. The Bible is true: Scientific truth is true. They must be able to find harmonious agreement. All apparent discord must arise from our imperfect knowledge. *God cannot work in contradiction to His Word; He cannot speak in contradiction to His Work.* Therefore it is a glorious labour to search out the hidden harmonies; to find "Natural Law in the Spiritual world;" to study the agreement between God's Word and His Works. No barriers of contradiction can really be exposed, save only so far as may arise from the limited scope of human understanding. God is Infinite in Wisdom and Power; we cannot hope to grasp the whole truth with intelligence that is finite.

Religion is the Mistress; Science is the Hand-maid. They ought mutually to assist and encourage—not embroil the house by strife and contention.

The believer in the Bible should seek earnestly to master the drift of scientific investigations, and so occupy the one coigne of vantage on which we may successfully meet the sceptic. Unless we be fully persuaded in our own mind, we cannot expect to convince others.

But it were absurd if any one who is persuaded of Bible truth should eye with suspicion or alarm the profound study of God's works. It were cowardice to shrink from controversy, to deny the necessity of agreement, to hush up one aspect of the question for fear of undermining the foundations of the other. If difficulties arise which seem hard to reconcile and explain, still, "as timber girt and bound together in a building cannot be shaken, so the heart that is stablished by advised counsel shall fear at no time." The angel said to Esdras, "The more thou searchest, the more thou shalt marvel." And Zophar the Naamathite asked Job; "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? High as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" What reverence could we have for the infinite unsearchable glory of God, if, like the old heathen deities, He were shaped round and determined by human comprehension?

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?”

Let us then who believe the WORD be full of charity towards those who mainly extol the WORKS. Let us never lose an opportunity to win them, by open-hearted unreserved sympathy, to a truer knowledge of God—to a certainty of the *oneness* of Truth Natural and Revealed. It would be hard to over-rate the importance of Natural Religion when St. Paul says that the wrath of God is declared against all ungodliness, even in those unenlightened by Gospel truth. “Because that which may be known of God is manifest to them, for God hath shown it to them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made—even His eternal power and Godhead—so that they are without excuse.”

“The *hearing ear* and the *seeing eye*, the Lord hath made even both of them.” If the soul be kindled with the very fervent desire after holiness by *hearing* the Gospel message, shall it not likewise be fired with adoration by *seeing* God’s glorious

majesty testified by the visible works of His hands? We who may both *hear and see* will be doubly held without excuse if we sever the twofold testimony and do despite to the unity of Truth.

Knowledge is running to and fro upon the earth: things formerly kept secret gradually come forth into light. To what climax are we advancing? What unknown wonders of discovery may the next thousand years open up? When shall the end be? We cannot doubt but that man is carrying out God's purposes in thus unravelling the mysteries of Nature. He is bringing to view more and more the inexhaustible treasures of Divine wisdom; showing to the world a more abundant measure of the glory of God. It cannot be that his energy is but lost labour—that he is losing his own soul while spending his power upon vanity. Science is not a fantastic fabric of wood and stubble—a presumptuous Babel, a foolish clatter of tongues—a giant insolence reared against God. We cannot deny the grandeur of that labour which teaches us more of the power, wisdom, glory, and love of God. Christ died to reconcile us to the God Whose power, wisdom, glory, and love are declared by His works. Let students of the Word and students of the Works recognise their fraternity in the holy family

of God, confessing that we both are fellow-pilgrims journeying through the mists and perplexities of earth towards a better country. Let us join hands in studying both the Word and the Works, for the God Who has spoken is the God Who has wrought.

If it be God's purpose to inaugurate an age when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"—we may look forward and hasten the coming of that time; for then must the world recognise the certainty that God's Word and God's Works are the Two Volumes of the one Book of Truth.

Infinite and unsearchable are the depths. "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" We may feel the edges of His train—touch the hem of His garment—but as we cry with Moses, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory"—the answer floats upon the wind, "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live. Thou shalt see my back parts; but My face shall not be seen." If the desire of our souls is to know God, we cannot refuse to avail ourselves of the light afforded by those who search into the secrets of Nature. Nor, on the other hand, can we ever cease to impress on those who search, that

their labour is shorn of its full benefit if exerted in a spirit of contempt or opposition towards the Word of God.

Who can understand the spreadings of the clouds when God arms His hand with lightnings? The noise of His moving announces Him : we hear attentively the noise of His voice. For what is the outpouring of the storm but an expression of that ENERGY which pervades the universe ; which, when followed up so far as we can trace it, can only be explained as THE POWER OF GOD. "He bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under His feet ; He did fly upon the wings of the wind ; He made darkness His secret place ; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire ; the Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice." The Forces of Nature are rays of one infinite Energy which is simply the *Power of God* sustaining the works which He has made. We cannot believe that these Forces were ever created, or that they will ever be annihilated. They regulate with unfailing precision the intricate machinery of life and motion in matter ; and I can see no other conclusion than

this—that when “God broke the stillness of eternity” by the creation, He embraced the matter created with His Almighty Power. We need no further solution, and may study with profound interest the investigations of Science and philosophical theories based upon them; exulting in each advance towards a closer appreciation of “those parts of His ways” which God condescends to put within our reach, to quicken our intellect and lead us to see that our highest powers of mind can find their best satisfaction in searching after Him—the LORD AND GIVER OF LIFE.

V.

CAN THESE BONES LIVE?

I LATELY received a very interesting present—the skeleton of a human hand with an illuminated scroll containing the words, “CAN THESE BONES LIVE?” Let us first see how those words are used in the Bible.

The Prophet Ezekiel was with the captive Israelites in the land of the Chaldeans. All hope of return for Israel and Judah was dead. By the waters of Babylon they could only sit down and weep as they remembered Sion. Their harps hung silent on the trees: they could not sing the Lord’s song in a strange land. Ezekiel comforted them in their distress. He told them of a future return to the beloved land. Specially by the vision of the Valley full of Dry Bones was this comfort brought. At God’s word there was a noise and a shaking, and the bones came together: sinews and flesh came upon them,

and the skin covered them. And the Lord said, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." So the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army. Thus should the dead hopes of Israel be revived by the breath of God's Word. That was the comforting truth of the vision.

But as I look often at the dry bones of that hand, and read the suggestive words applied to them by the friend who gave the present, they seem to have some lesson to teach, some truth to convey. "Can these bones live?" The question apparently requires an answer — Yes or No. For the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body is a truth of such mighty import that we may well endeavour to arrive at a right understanding of it. Am I to believe that in the Resurrection at the last day, the dry bones of that hand will be caught away in a moment, to be joined to the other bones of the body to which it belonged in life? Where are the other parts of that body? Will they be snatched from their resting-place, it may be thousands of miles apart, to build up once more the resurrection-body of the person to whom they belonged in life? Such a thought seems certainly far-fetched and improbable; and, I think,

without any hesitation we may answer No to the question—those dry bones *cannot* live ; never more will they be otherwise than what they are, dead elements of the dead earth from which they were taken ; dust they are, and unto dust they shall return.

The RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD is one of the doctrines of the Christian Faith, not only interesting, but absolutely essential ; “ for if the dead rise not—if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” Therefore we should carefully study the Bible-teaching upon the subject, and try to form a reasonable and intelligent idea of the truth.

Jesus Christ, the First-fruits from the dead, showed Himself on the day of His Resurrection to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and in the same evening to the thirteen disciples assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem. Suddenly He stood in the midst of them. They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit ; but He said, “ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I myself : handle Me and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.” He even ate food before them, to prove the reality of His Bodily Presence. We believe that it was His actual Body, the flesh and bones that

He wore before His crucifixion and death. We cannot help so believing when He drew such emphatic notice to the fact. And with that body He ascended into heaven. Nevertheless we also believe that after His Resurrection, the Body reanimated, and to all appearance the same, was *glorified* as a *Spiritual* body; never more to experience the frailties of mortality; never again to know hunger or thirst, weariness or pain. We cannot say more than this, nor can we pretend in any way to understand the change which came upon the Saviour's Body.*

* With all reverence and humility I would suggest that any attempt to speak particularly about the Resurrection-Body of our Lord must land us in difficulty. For example, when He ascended in the cloud, what can we say of the *apparel* He wore? Was that endowed with immutability? If not, what replaced it? Whether or not we suppose that it accompanied Him, the subsequent difficulties are equally formidable.

May we not believe that among the attributes of the glorified and spiritual body is pre-eminently that of *adapting itself to its surroundings*? that, so long as our Lord was with the disciples, His Body presented the familiar outlines of feature, form, and apparel; and that when received into the cloud out of their sight, when no longer to be associated with things of earth, its glory and spirituality assumed a character that should be consistent with the surroundings of the highest heavens? While not for a moment gainsaying the doctrine of the fourth Article of our Religion, we have the authority of Bishop Harold Browne for claiming a certain latitude in interpreting its teaching; and I feel convinced that unrestricted fulness must be assigned to the epithets "*glorified*" and "*spiritual*," as inducing a *change* of which we can form *no conception*.

The question which more immediately concerns us is—Must we argue from this that our resurrection-bodies will contain the actual substance of flesh and bones, &c., which they contained in earthly life? Such a belief would involve many difficulties and inconsistencies, and does not seem at all necessary. We shall rise with bodies suited to a new condition of things—*spiritual* bodies, not *natural*; bodies specially adapted to the requirements of the *spirit*, as now they are adapted to those of the *soul*, never more to know change or decay. Christ “shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory;” but there is no need to think that the *actual substance* of the earthly body will be required. The Bible does not authorise such a belief; nay, it seems to point to an opposite conclusion, thereby removing much doubt and difficulty upon the question. For it would seem probable that the same substances must have been used continually to form different human bodies among the countless millions who have lived since the creation of man. It would be hard to imagine that the material once used is reserved in its dissolution for the resurrection-body of the person to whom it belonged in life. Were it so, what could we say of those whose bodies

have been devoured by wild beasts? What could we say of those among nations who burn their dead, when all the bodily substance, except a small residue of ashes, is caught by the winds of heaven and dispersed possibly to the farthest corners of the earth? Even when laid to rest in the quiet churchyard the body is dissolved into its elements, and these may pass into the substance of trees and herbs to form the food of animals, on which man himself may feed. It therefore seems incredible to imagine that the *same substances* will be used to form the resurrection-bodies of men. God could, of course, preserve every atom of substance that ever belonged to a human body for its individual appropriation hereafter; but such an idea seems to present unnecessary obstacles against the acceptance of the doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead.

St. Paul's teaching on the subject seems clearly to point to the opposite conclusion. The question was asked in his day, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" And he answers it by the comparison of a grain of corn sown in the ground, which dissolves away so soon as the process of growth begins. The grain of wheat is nothing more than the mortal tabernacle

which holds the slumbering life of the seed before its energy is delivered from the bondage of corruption. When that life begins to assert its wonderful powers, it casts off the dead elements of its body. If we pull up a grain that has begun to germinate, we find its substance reduced to unsightly clots of gelatinous decay. There is the shoot springing upwards, and the slender thread-like roots spreading downwards; and the discoloured substance of the grain is clinging to the roots, soon to be entirely cast off and to disappear. The new plant builds up its new body from the materials of the soil around, nurtured by the influences of sun and rain. Thus the grain which was sown dies and wastes; but the *life* of the grain, no longer imprisoned within the mortal body, clothes itself with a glorified body. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him."

There are bodies suited to the necessities of earth-born creatures; there are bodies suited to the higher condition of those born into the kingdom of heaven. The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. As with the grain of wheat, there is the body suited to its requirements so long as it is merely a grain; there is the higher body suited to its requirements when its life is set free

to expand and develop into the full glory of its perfection.

So also is the Resurrection of the Dead. It is sown in corruption, like the grain of wheat. The mortal body is committed to the ground, there to crumble and waste away, to sleep the long sleep that knows no waking, to return to the dust from whence it was taken. But it shall be raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. These grand contrasts seem to put away all idea of the *same substance* being necessary in the resurrection-body. If it were otherwise, the comparison of the seed-corn would not be appropriate; for the grain casts away its old body, and receives its new body given by God from another source. If it were otherwise, the corruption and dishonour and weakness of the natural body could not accurately be said to give place entirely to the incorruption and glory and power of the spiritual body. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. St. Paul keeps the two distinct: there is no confusion of the one with the other. Even with those who shall be alive at the coming of the Lord—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they who

stand at His appearance in the clothing of earth will be *changed*. As truly and completely as if they had lain in the grave for centuries, the body of their humiliation will be changed into the body of their glory. For this corruptible must put on incorruption. God must give to that which is earthy the image of the heavenly. It matters not to Him whether this be done suddenly, or after the earthy body has dissolved into dust. The change must be wrought; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

By the very nature of their substance, flesh and blood, sinews and bones, are liable to change and decay. They cannot in their natural state inherit the kingdom of God. Even in health and strength our earthly bodies are always undergoing change. We are told that all through life there is *not one particle* left of the body which we had seven years before. It has all been renewed. We do not argue from this, that the body of a man at twenty-one is not really his, because it has been renewed completely three times since he was born. It is surely his; just as the resurrection-body will be his, although it may not contain one particle of the substance it possessed in life.

Imagine for a moment that we are standing by the sea on a stormy day, when long waves are rolling in towards the shore. Notice that wave far away, towering above the rest. See how it advances, lifting and fringeing its crest with creamy foam. On it comes, nearer and nearer; and now it is rearing its mighty volume for the final plunge. It bursts with a noise of thunder in a showery cloud of splashing spray, and its deluge of broken foam flows seething and curdling back over the shingle. We watched that wave from far out at sea: we never took our eyes off it till it burst with a voice of thunder upon the shore.

But stop! Was it really the same wave? How so? The *water* did not move towards land. The water was only tossing up and down, without travelling onwards at all. Not one drop of the water which that wave had fifty yards off was flung upon the shore. And yet it was the *same* wave: it never gave place to another: we watched it the whole time. Yes, indeed it was the same wave—because it contained, as it were, THE SAME SOUL, breathed into it by the wind which furrowed the surface of ocean leagues away.

And that is how it is with our bodies. It makes no difference what the actual substance is that composes

them. It makes not the smallest difference to our identity *now* whether we change in appearance so completely that after a few years' absence our friends do not recognise us at all. A boy comes back to visit his old school, and we have no idea who he is: if we met him in the street we should pass him as a stranger. Yet he is the same boy, *because his body contains the same soul and spirit*. The same—though, if he has been absent seven years, he has not one particle of the same bodily form which he had when at school.

Even so will it be with our resurrection-bodies. They will be just as much ours: we shall be raised with *our* bodies, although they may not necessarily contain one particle of the substance we had at any time during life. They will indeed be ours, because animated by our immortal soul and spirit. The same—though the corruption in which they were committed to the ground shall have given place to incorruption: the same—though the weakness of mortality, the dishonour of dust and clay, shall be forgotten in the glory and power of immortal splendour. What a sublime truth this is! Let it be further impressed by a message from the beach on which we stood in imagination a few moments ago. See where the breaking of that wave has left the

shingle wet; how vividly the colours of each stone are kindled into grace! Take up that pale translucent stone so curiously marked: it contains the perfect form of some creature—all the tentacles radiating from the central body and waving throughout the substance of the stone, tinted with shades of orange and purple. How wonderful and beautiful it is! Thousands of years ago that creature was living in the sea; so frail in its texture, so liable to corruption, that if it had lain for an hour upon the dry beach it would inevitably have shrivelled into death. That which was corruptible, which we should perhaps have shrunk from touching, has been rescued from decay and rendered beautiful in death. God has raised it up after lying unnoticed for thousands of years. He has shown it to us clothed in immortal beauty. Its dishonour and weakness have given place to glory and power. No contrast could be greater than between the frailty of that zoophyte when alive and its imperishable hardness in the clothing of adamantine flint. God has preserved it, and given it a body as it hath pleased Him. Every particle of the original creature has disappeared, yet each particle has been replaced in flint with such exquisite accuracy, that, if examined by the microscope, every detail of its

structure would be detected; and we say rightly that it is the same creature, because the *character* imparted to it by its life is there preserved in exact completeness.

Jesus Christ, Who rose from the dead, has power to raise His people; both now, in spirit from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and hereafter, in body from the weakness of corruption to the power of immortal glory.

May God, by the Holy Spirit, impress this truth upon our hearts; and so quicken us into newness of life, that our bodies now may be temples of the Holy Ghost, and hereafter be raised in glory to enjoy the everlasting happiness of His kingdom in heaven.

VI.

THE MIRROR.

“PORTRAIT OF A GORILLA. How very interesting! but hardly, perhaps, conducive to the learning of Latin grammar, Dawson. Photographed from nature, eh? Let me see. . . . Oh, really, not an accurate likeness, I hope! It is well that we should sometimes ‘see ourselves as others see us,’ but this is a startling and unexpected revelation. You need not apologise, my boy; you didn’t mean to show it to me, but as it was making you and your friend idle, I called you to bring it up. You are only to blame for wasting the lesson-time, and that is a serious misdemeanour. But your portrait (not yours, you say?) is confiscated, and if the grammar is not known it must be learnt in play-time, so don’t waste another moment.”

My young friend’s “portrait” suggested the following thoughts.

It is well to be often reminded of this truth—that Christian duty requires not merely the hearing of God's word, but the doing of His commandments. It is not enough to listen to what God says: we must do what God wishes. We must keep His commandments. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Two things are very certain—that we can never of ourselves win heaven by good works, and that we can never expect to reach heaven without them.

St. James draws a comparison between those who hear only and those who practise what they hear. The former hear and forget immediately—like a man who takes a hurried glance at himself in the looking-glass. The latter hear and remember, like a man who looks intently, and continues looking at himself.

Artists often paint their own portraits. They place a mirror on one side and a canvas before them, and study their reflected countenance with deep attention, and so make a faithful picture. The result would be far otherwise if the artist merely gave one hurried glance at the mirror, and then put it aside and began to paint. He would straightway forget what manner of man he was, and the portrait would

not be a true likeness. There is a great difference between a hasty glance and a long attentive observation; between hearing only with the ears and hearing with the inmost spirit. In the one case, what is heard makes no impression: in the other case, what is heard is kept in mind, and the person becomes not a forgetful hearer but a doer of God's work.

Like all passages of the Bible, this reference to a looking-glass, or rather a mirror of burnished metal, will repay any thought expended upon it. The man who looks in a glass sees a true likeness of himself; every feature in form and expression true to life. That is what he sees. If he takes only a hasty glance, he gets a momentary flash, showing him what he is like, but he cannot keep the impression in his mind. He goes away and forgets what he was like. But if he looks long and carefully, and continues looking, then he gets a much deeper impression, and so long as he looks he has actually before his mind his true appearance. He cannot forget what he is like so long as he is looking at himself.

Let us think of THE BIBLE as THE MIRROR, especially the New Testament—the Gospels and Epistles. In them we may see what we are like, truly and openly reflected. For by reading the Bible we see what God would have us be, and then we see whether

we resemble His pattern of holiness or not. Man was created originally in the image of God, but that image has been spoilt and defaced by sin. It has to be restored, just as a skilful picture-dealer restores an apparently ruined picture. God desires that each one of us should bring back the resemblance to Him which has been lost. By the power of the Holy Spirit we must restore in ourselves the likeness of Jesus Christ—be conformed to His image: we must take Him for an example, and make ourselves like Him so far as is possible. The Bible shows us how we are fulfilling this mighty requirement. If we merely take a hasty glance at what God in the Bible teaches and commands us to do, and then forget all about it—if we only pay such outward observance as to hear His word without further thought—then we may possibly see at the moment what we are like, different in many respects from what we ought to be; but we shall go away and forget, and it will be an unprofitable glance.

We need not go far for an example of this. If, during the service, a member of the congregation allows his thoughts to wander, his attention to God's word must be but the hasty glance. If we do not use the opportunity specially given for looking attentively into what God says, it is not likely that

we shall be anxious to make opportunity for ourselves. It is not probable that any one who lets a service of public prayer and praise pass without really joining in it heart and soul, will be very careful in his own private acts of devotion. Therefore when we come into Church we should ask God earnestly to pour His Spirit upon us, that we may enter into every part of the service; that we may draw near to Him by its means; that we may hear His word and feed upon it, and most solemnly desire to put into practice the truths which it points out.

There is a golden command and promise—DRAW NIGH TO GOD, AND HE WILL DRAW NIGH TO YOU. If you do not draw nigh to Him in Church, when will you? Your attitude and outward attention may compare favourably with that of other members in the congregation; but it is sad if your attention is only outward. It is sad if you do not really rise up to heaven and draw close to God in the prayers you pray and the praise you sing. It is sad if you are only hearers, not anxious to be doers of the word. It is sad if you are like the man who takes a hasty glance, but does not gaze with a determination to observe intently.

If, on the contrary, we look attentively into God's

law, and continue looking; if we not only read and hear, but mark, learn, and inwardly digest what God says; if we earnestly desire to get at its full truth with prayer and strong resolution—then surely we shall not be hearers who forget, but there will be some strong and profitable result.

Each passage of the Bible, whenever it is read or explained, should be to us a mirror. We should look into it and see ourselves reflected in it. Each particular verse chosen as the text of a sermon should be to us a mirror. We should look into it, and so take it as intended entirely for us, that it should show us a true reflection of ourself. For example, the text—“BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT HEARERS ONLY, DECEIVING YOUR OWN SELVES.” Looking into that verse as a mirror, we should see what we are like. Do I see myself reflected as *doing* God’s word, or only *hearing* it? We should take, not a hurried glance, but a patient and careful observation. We should see whether we are living through the week with any real desire to be imitating the example of Jesus Christ and showing forth God’s glory; whether we are doing any work that we are not ashamed to offer Him as a sacrifice well-pleasing. It is easy enough to hear such a verse read and explained, and at the moment, perhaps, to feel that we might be more care-

ful to carry it out in practice. It is easy at the moment to see our true likeness and confess that it is not altogether satisfactory. But if nothing more comes of it, if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man taking a hurried glance at his face in a glass, and then going away and straightway forgetting what manner of man he was. Such a glance cannot be of much use. We ought to look more attentively, and if we see ourselves reflected as different from the image which God desires, then surely we should take all possible measures to improve our appearance, that God may look with favour upon it.

When a lady of high degree is going to be presented at court; when she is going into the Queen's presence to receive the proud honour of a personal introduction to her sovereign; does she content herself with one hurried glance in the mirror, and give no further thought to her appearance? Far otherwise. She stands before the mirror looking at herself long and carefully. She takes the utmost trouble to render her appearance as fair and attractive as possible. She omits nothing of the smallest detail, and adds every available touch of art to assist or correct nature; in fact, she studies her reflection in the mirror with absorbed and undivided attention.

Even so, since we have to appear before the presence of God, we should look long and earnestly into the Word of God, to see what is amiss in our appearance ; and by prayer and watchfulness we should try continually to grow in grace and spiritual beauty, until we become more truly conformed to the pattern that God has given—the holy and pure example of Jesus Christ.

When we look into the mirror of the Bible we see more than merely our own appearance. There is a superstition that when a maiden looks in the glass upon All Hallows' Eve she sees the image of her future husband. There is no superstition in the truth, that when we look into the mirror of the Bible, we see something more than our own appearance reflected. We see it in the reward of heaven held out to God's faithful servants, and the doom of eternal banishment and woe to those who care not to serve Him. We see the goodness and greatness of God, our Creator, Benefactor, Preserver, Father and Friend. St. Paul uses the same metaphor of a mirror with reference to the knowledge permitted us by the Bible of these and all other spiritual truths. He says that now we see them "by means of a mirror," that is, not the actual realities but only their reflection. The Authorised Version, "Now we see through a

glass darkly," does not give the meaning clearly. The Revised Version says, "Now we see in a mirror darkly." Now, while on earth, we see in the Bible a reflection of the goodness of God and the glorious rewards of heaven. These are so infinite that we cannot understand them. Just as God showed visions of His glory and visions of heaven to Moses and St. Stephen and St. John—images and not the actual realities, which no man hath seen nor can see—so does He display to us in the Bible a reflection of the perfect character of Jesus Christ and a reflection of the heavenly inheritance. We see them as in a mirror, and ourselves associated with them.

If we look carefully and continue looking at God, and Christ, and Heaven, and at our own interest in those eternal realities, we cannot fail to profit by the exercise. We shall long to reach Heaven and desire to please God and imitate Jesus Christ; we shall watch and pray, and our life will be sincere and not wasted in careless indifference: it will be a sacrifice of loyal devotion to God, not a half-hearted getting through the days as they pass.

Keep before you as far as possible the remembrance of Jesus Christ, and pray that you may imitate His example—doing what you think He

would do in your place. See the brightness of His goodness and love reflected in the pages of the Holy Gospel—not with a hurried glance, but with constant attention; that by the power of the Holy Ghost you may be learning to conform yourself to His image, and so be not forgetful hearers of God's word but doers of God's work—that His blessing may be upon you in life, His presence with you in death, and His unveiled glory your abiding portion throughout the endless ages of eternity.

VII.

THE UNFINISHED BLESSING.

IN St. Luke's account of the Ascension, he tells us that *while Jesus blessed the disciples* He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. He had led them out as far as to Bethany, a village close to Jerusalem. He was standing with them on the Mount of Olives. He had told them to go forth into all the world and preach His Name. He had given them the glorious assurance, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And then, as His last visible act upon earth, He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

In the services of our Church the most sacred portion seems to be the concluding sentence, wherein the minister prays that the Blessing of God may be amongst and remain with the congregation always. The congregation goes away with the dew of God's blessing poured upon them afresh. As in the

wilderness, manna fell with the dew, and that bread from heaven vanished when the sun had dried the dew; so does the blessing of God fall with the prayer at the close of a service; and as the remembrance of that blessing may be dimmed by the worldliness of the week, and made to vanish by the burden and heat of the working-day; so is it continually renewed.

It is a good thing to receive often this solemn invocation of God's blessing. The value and grace of those concluding words are increased when we remember that Jesus Christ finished His last service upon earth with His Blessing. He took leave of His disciples and sent them forth from His Presence with His Blessing.

There is deep spiritual comfort in the words, "*while He blessed them He was parted from them.*" It is a beautiful thought, to draw the soul of man nearer to the Saviour of mankind, and strengthen those who are weak of purpose in coming to Him. For it tells us that *that blessing was never finished*. None of the disciples, who stood gazing so earnestly after Him as He rose in the cloud, heard the last words of that blessing. We may think that it was *not* finished because it *could not* be finished. The Blessing of Jesus Christ knows no end. Broad and

deep and unfathomable as the ocean, it shall be amongst and remain with His children always. As He blessed the disciples He was parted from them. Though He ascended into Heaven, yet He had promised to be with them always. As His last blessing uttered on earth had no last word for human ears, so may we love to think of it as never having a last word. He ever liveth to bless His children. He is with them always, even unto the end of the world. He has said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

The Ascension-day can leave no more beautiful thought than that of *Christ's unfinished Blessing*. Had there been a break—had the last word, the Amen, been heard—had there been a silence which none dare interrupt—the greatness of the consolation would be less. He, Who came down from heaven to pour upon mankind the blessings of His infinite love, to bring them forgiveness of sins, and restore those who were far off into favour with God, to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers—He withdrew His visible Presence while speaking words of blessing. The last echoes of those words were never heard, but through all time shall they linger in the

ears of all who believe in Him, heard far away in the depths of heaven whither He is ascended.

The Blessing of Jesus Christ, like His Presence, may be with us always. The only condition is, that *we keep His words*, and so prove that we love Him. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and I will love him." All other appeals seem weak in comparison with that. There is deep consolation in that promise, and also a solemn responsibility. If a man does *not* love Him, we cannot say that He will not love that man. His love is so boundless that no limit can be set to it. Jesus loves the sinner, though He hates the sin; and if sin is allowed to estrange our hearts from Him in this life, the estrangement will continue in the world beyond—not because He hated us, but because we did not love Him; because we did not prove our love to Him by keeping His words.

The force of the argument is, that we must never let go the determination to please and serve Him now. By so doing, we can make certain of securing His love; and unless we secure His love, we shall lose it through wilful carelessness. He is ever waiting to show mercy; but unless we are in earnest, we shall be refusing and thrusting Him away. As

He said to the Pharisees, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life."

Let us think of Jesus Christ as longing to love and bless us. Think of His last blessing—unfinished, infinite—spoken almost in the same breath with the words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Keep these thoughts in remembrance; for they may be a strong motive in influencing your present life. They will make you more anxious to please Him; and *that anxiety* is the essence of *faith proved by works*; the secret of a holy life. "My son, give Me thine heart," is God's invitation. All His commandments are fulfilled as a matter of consequence if that invitation be accepted. We cannot make the water of a well pure unless the well be clean. We cannot expect the fruit of a tree to be wholesome, unless the tree be one which produces wholesome fruit. A thorn tree will not bear grapes, nor a thistle figs. It would be vain to ask any one to keep God's commandments and live for God's glory unless his heart is set upon it. The first prayer must be, "Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Then as a matter of course God's commandments will be heard and obeyed; Christ's words will be kept;

They will love that heart, and take up Their abode in it.

One chief characteristic of Jesus Christ is, that HE CAN NEVER CHANGE. As we read of Him in the Gospel when He lived visibly upon earth, so is He now, when exalted to glory at the right hand of God. Now, as then, He draws children to Him, puts His hands upon them and blesses them. Now, as then, He sympathises with every weakness and infirmity of body or soul. He longs to stretch forth His hand to heal the broken-hearted. He longs to speak the word that shall raise from death unto life, from blindness to sight, from weakness to strength. He calls all who labour and are heavy-laden to come that He may give them rest. He is the Friend of all who need. We must approach Him as a Friend. We must not treat Him with less affection than we should show towards a friend upon earth. Friendships are not always very deep or lasting; but there are times when it is everything "to hear the voice, and catch the eye, and grasp the hand of a sincere friend." And there will be a time when no friend can bring comfort to the soul except that Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. God can wring from the soul by anguish, the cry, "O let me feel Thee near me!

O let me hear Thee speaking! O guide me, call me, draw me!" But He would sooner hear that cry uttered through love. If Jesus is our Friend, we must treat Him as such. We must seek His Presence; we must like to imitate Him, and listen to Him. "Because He continueth ever, and is unchangeable, He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

May the Holy Spirit impress these words upon your heart, and make them fall as a warm ray to melt any coldness which numbs your soul from ascending and dwelling with Christ. We all have need—those who read, and he who writes.

The Ascension festival encourages us to long more earnestly to ascend and with Him continually dwell, in that true friendship which unites two hearts in one—as in the song, "His heart is mine; and mine He cannot miss:" as in the hymn, "I nothing lack if I am His, and He is mine for ever."

Life has often been compared to a voyage over the sea, varied with occasions of storm and calm, always beset with dangers, always needing a careful watch. Some are in the early part of that voyage; others have proceeded further. We are all speeding towards the unknown shore, which at any time may

loom suddenly upon the horizon. Is there no danger of shipwreck? None—if we sail with His Presence in the ship, who, when a storm falls upon the waters, can say, “Peace, be still!”

“On the golden sands by the sea,
As the sun drew near his rest,
We stood to watch the stately ship
Ride slowly down to the west.”

A boy was in the ship, and his farewell words had been—

“‘I shall be safe on the sea
When the waves and thunders roar;
For Christ is to sail in the ship with me,
And bring me safe to shore.’

“And so we bless the Lord,
And so we wait to see
Our sailor-lad in a little while
In the land where we would be.
For on calm and golden seas,
Or tossed by wave and blast,
Each soul which sails with Christ must come
To the heavenly shore at last.”

Jesus has promised, “Lo, I am with you always: if a man love Me, I will love Him;” His blessing knows no end; it will abide with us always if we do not despise it. Let us be more in earnest

about securing His blessing. Let us make Him our FRIEND, that in His safe keeping we may sail safely over the waves of this troublesome world, in God's good time to reach the heavenly shore—the land where we would be.

VIII.

NEAR AND FAR.

IN considering the Nature of God, we are all on the same level: the child understands just as much as the man, and no explanation can make the mystery clearly intelligible to our minds.

There is ONE GOD—the Creator and Upholder of the Universe. There are THREE PERSONS in The One God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

God, while ever present with us, hath His dwelling on high—dwelling in light which no man can approach unto—Whom no man hath seen, nor can see. God has condescended to reveal Himself in some measure to man, the noblest of earthly creatures. Whether or not there are beings in other worlds on whom He has conferred the same honour, we cannot say. It is most unlikely that our world should be the only one among the countless millions

which contains creatures capable of understanding in some degree the greatness and glory of God. Many of those stars which throng the heavens may equal and surpass our star in the richness of God's infinite power and love. They may be full of life and thought, while they know nothing more of other worlds than we do. We can only speak with any certainty about the world in which we are placed. And as we look around, we are struck with man's superiority above all other animals. A great and wide gulf separates us from them—a gulf which they can never pass. They have varied powers of instinct. They have many of the same feelings that we have. They appreciate the value of life; they build themselves suitable houses with skill which man could not imitate. We could not build a nest of twigs that should defy the winds—the first gust would demolish it.

But the lower animals seem almost as far below us in mind and understanding as we are below God Himself. And what makes the great difference between us and them is this—*they have no power to understand anything of the Nature of God.*

God has gifted us with this high power, and He reasonably expects us to make use of it. We are able to understand something of His infinite great-

ness, and we are responsible for that ability. We are compelled to acknowledge that things could not have created themselves, nor come into existence by chance. God created them, and God alone keeps them continually fulfilling the purposes of His will.

Now, since God has given us this power of partly understanding His greatness, He has gone further and told us much about Himself. In times past He "spake unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners"—words often full of dark mystery, but yet sufficiently clear to bring certain and definite intelligence. And later on, God came Himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ, to dwell as a Man among men, that He might actually instruct us by His own word of mouth. Jesus Christ was God Himself, veiled under the appearance of man. And He revealed God to men, so far as might be; though they could not fully recognise Him, for the natural man cannot fully discern spiritual realities. And once more, God desires to instruct us further in the knowledge of Himself by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit.

These bright summer days may help us to realise

something of the truth. There is the sun in heaven, distant from us so many millions of miles, that, though we can write down the figures, we cannot in the least imagine the space. We look up towards the sun; our eyes travel the distance in the fraction of a second, to all practical purposes. And although the sun is so infinitely *far off*, yet we feel its influence as though it were very *near*. Even so, God Himself, while dwelling in the highest heavens, is still close to us. "The Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands . . . though He be not far from every one of us."

The sun is *far* and *near* at the same moment; not in a vague and uncertain sense, but so really and truly that the smallest insect and the meanest weed may feel its power and rejoice in its life-giving influence. God also is far and near at the same moment: He dwells in the Highest Heaven, yet is His abiding Presence with the humble in heart.

St. Paul says that Jesus Christ is "the dazzling brightness flashing from the glory of God—the express Image of His Person." The sun may be regarded as a fit emblem of God's real nearness to us, though He dwells in heaven—a nearness which reaches to us all. And the dazzling brightness flashing from the sun is an emblem of Jesus Christ

—Light of (proceeding from) Light. We cannot separate the sun's apparent nearness from its actual farness. Nor can we separate the sun's dazzling power from the sun itself. So also we cannot separate Jesus Christ, not even when He dwelt visibly with men, from God, who even then was in heaven. "He that came down from heaven was the Son of man Which (even then) was in heaven;" on earth and in heaven at the same moment.

We read of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, set forth in the Bible as ONE GOD, yet THREE distinct PERSONS; and though utterly unable to understand the mystery, yet we see in the sun a suggestive emblem of the truth; for the one sun exerts a mighty three-fold influence upon all things that have life. It gives them light; it gives them warmth; and it governs their power of growth. We pray the Father, for the sake of the Son, to send the Holy Ghost to fill us with life and draw our souls to Him. Yet there are not three Gods but ONE GOD. That is the first grand principle of the Christian faith; and in grasping it the unlearned child is on a level with the wisest man. It would be wasting words to try and explain the mystery. It would be foolishness and presumption

to think we could fully understand God's nature, when we cannot even understand our own. We know not how the soul and spirit are contained in the body, but that is no reason why we should not believe that they are contained in it. We know not how the food we eat is converted into the thoughts we think; and if we cannot at all understand our own nature, how can we expect to understand God? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out; He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of mercy."

Trinity Sunday calls us to think earnestly of our most holy faith, and embrace it without a shadow of doubt, though its mystery is beyond our understanding. The Epistle puts before us a vision of God in heaven, receiving the adoration of all things created; and it is for us to come forward and join in the universal worship. Heaven is open; God is enthroned in glory and light of unearthly splendour, faintly suggested by the radiance of sapphire, sard, and emerald. Around His throne are represented the spirits of just men made perfect. Emblems of Creation, in the form of seraphic beings, are there, engaged in unceasing praise—resting not

day and night in praising the thrice-holy God. It is a vision of God's glory, extolled by the worship of His saints and the praise of His creatures. In that worship and praise we must each take a part, if hereafter we are to share in His glory. That is the teaching of to-day. They sang in heaven, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created." And the refrain of that song must find its echoes upon earth. That vision was sent to St. John for the comfort and edification of God's servants on earth. It is one of the helps given to us in the Bible, to assist us in forming an idea of His glory; and it is our duty to consider it well.

God from His heavenly throne looks down upon this world. He sees men moving upon it, going about their varied occupations, influenced or not by the desire to serve and please Him. He sees all other things of His creation setting forth His praise, by fulfilling His purpose entirely. He sees the planets glittering on their heavenly way, giving proof of His power and amazing wisdom in the majestic orbits of their courses. He sees the clouds and winds and lightnings, the floods and ocean-billows, the storms and winter snow, the days

of cloudless beauty ; speaking continually of His beneficent wisdom and unbounded power. He hears in the song of birds, in the rustle of leaves, in the soft whispers of the valley and sonorous murmurs of the mountain — the exaltation of His praise. And He watches with attention that knows no weariness, to see whether each one of us is really joining in that ceaseless hymn ; because it is possible that our voice may not be heard. Out of all the varied wonders of His creative skill, man is the only creature which can decline to take part in praising God. Man, because he alone is free to choose between life and good, death and evil, can actually choose the latter if he will. Out of all God's glorious creation we only are found capable of dishonouring Him ! It is a thought to make the knees tremble and sink in the dust ; to cover the face with shame, and wring from the tongue a desperate prayer for help that we may never be guilty of such sin. It should be a thought of overwhelming anxiety.

God looks at each heart with scrutiny as earnest as if that one heart were the only object of His care. He longs so infinitely to secure its cheerful and willing service. He goes after it when it is gone astray : He seeks it like a sheep that is lost ;

and if He can bring it back, He rejoices over it more than over ninety and nine which need no repentance. He cannot compel it to be His: He cannot destroy the freedom of its liberty to serve and love Him, or scorn and dishonour Him. God will only plead with us: it must be ours to lend a ready ear to His voice.

Let us then continually pray to Him for help in fulfilling this our most solemn duty. Let us make familiar use of the prayer, "O God, for Christ's sake, give me the Holy Spirit;" that by such a confession of the true faith we may acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty worship the Unity. That simple prayer, used constantly with the heart's best intention, expresses the Mystery of our Faith, and implies a conviction of its truth in the simple language of a child. That prayer contains the utmost extent of knowledge of God's nature to which the wisest can aspire. It is the simplicity of the little child in which the kingdom of heaven must be received. And if it is always used with sincerity, its fulfilment will be blessed to us, and our lives now will be showing forth the glory of God. We shall be laying up in store the future inheritance of everlasting life, to find a place before

the throne of God and take part in the hymn of heaven—"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created."

IX.

A SHADOW THAT PASSETH AWAY.

THE comparison of life to a shadow is no doubt common in many languages, and of ancient origin. In the Book of Job, B.C. 1520, we find the words "Our days upon earth are a shadow." It was a favourite metaphor with David, and imitated by his son Solomon. No other writers in the Bible seem to use it. The comparison is likely to prove interesting and suggestive when followed out.

Three leading thoughts present themselves in connection with a shadow. There must be Light to form it; there must be Substance to cast it; the Light is never seen by the Shadow.

Cloud-shadows move over the hills; wave-shadows undulate over a field of corn, when the ears bow their heads as if in worship, while the breath of God blows over them. A great rock casts a shadow in a weary land.

If Life is a Shadow, there must be Light and Reality closely connected with it.

Probably David had in view only the vain unsubstantial nature of a shadow when he compared to it our life on earth. Fleeting—vain—unsubstantial! It is a melancholy reflection. And David heightens the sadness of the thought in Psalm cxliv. 4 when he says: “Man is like to vanity; his days are as a *shadow that passeth away*.”

Towards the close of a cloudless summer day, when the sun gets low and the shadows are lengthened to their fullest extent, nature seems most beautiful in the heightened contrast. Then the sun gradually sinks below the horizon, *the shadows pass away*, and in their place is *shade*. The landscape has lost the spirit of vigorous life, though not yet obscured by darkness. A veil of sadness lingers upon it. There is the calm, holy, pensive twilight—the brief interval before the night cometh when no man can work.

Life in its morning and noon is a Shadow; but it is a shadow in its strength, when the light is strong, and the shadow speaks of light behind substance. We do not fully realise at such times that life is a *shadow that passeth away*. It seems rather,

if a shadow at all, one that continues in strength and breadth.

The text introduces a peculiar sadness, in that it speaks of the passing, declining, melting of life's shadow. It speaks of the *withdrawal of the light*; for under no other conditions can the phenomenon be witnessed. We are only conscious of the passing away of a shadow when the brightness of light departs—specially in the evening of a summer day.

So, when a long life draws towards its close; when the light of life sets, *then* is the truth forced upon the soul, that the Shadow of life is passing away.

It is hardly possible to understand the comparison until we reach the evening of old age. For the vigour of youth and manhood is strong. The powers of mind and body are equal to the demands made upon them. It is when the threescore years and ten have gone by, and shed their snows upon the aged head; when the years draw nigh that have no pleasure, when limbs are feeble and the strong men bow themselves, when the eyes are dim—it is *then* that the truth is realised. We are brought into a narrow place where is no room to turn to the right hand or to the left; we must con-

temple the moment fast approaching, when the silver cord will snap by which the lamp of life hangs from the ceiling, and the golden bowl will be broken which holds the oil of the spirit. It is *then*, in the twilight hours of a long life, that the soul must confess that all things of earth are vanity—that life is a shadow that passeth away.

This subject was suggested by a letter received from one who has reached that time. These were the words—"I can truly say, that, were it not for my trust in God's wisdom and Fatherly care, my poor heart would break at seeing the gradual decay of powers, with the mind as fresh as ever. However, I believe in God's daily care and protection, as if I saw Him with my own eyes standing before me." The words of Cicero speaking about old age were full of weight because put into the mouth of the aged Cato. So should words carry weight, when uttered by one who is experiencing the solemn truth—

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day."

When the shadow is actually passing; if we live to see it getting weaker by the ordered course of nature, and feel that it is gradually declining never more to regain strength; *then* there must be sad-

ness. It is sad to notice the decline in others ; it will be sad to notice it in ourselves.

Now, seeing that if God spares our life we must all come to the twilight stage, it is wise to contemplate the prospect beforehand. For the remembrance of life's vanity will lead us to take a right view of its present obligations. We shall learn by the contemplation that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Solomon, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, writes with the strongest conviction of experience about the vanity of life. He had tasted more fully than any man the pleasures of wealth, wisdom, and power. He learnt that all things in which his soul delighted must fail and be left for others. He had built houses, planted vineyards, made gardens and orchards, and artificial lakes ; he had gathered silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of kings ; whatever his eyes desired he kept not from them. He devoted himself to learning, he wrote books of proverbs and books of songs ; books on flowers, trees, and all animals ; his wisdom excelled all the wisdom of the East. Yet he could not find any lasting satisfaction. It vexed him grievously to think that everything must be given up ; that he was,

after all, no better off than a poor man who knew not pleasure, and a foolish man who knew not wisdom. "I hated," he says, "all my labour, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me." It vexed him to see that God's dealings with men do not always agree with men's ideas of what is fit; that often the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. He had seen a besieged city saved by the wisdom of a poor man, yet no man remembered that same poor man. He had seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

Solomon's reflections upon the vanity of life are full of bitterness and disappointment. He even found no difference between man and the beasts of the field: one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; all go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity. For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?

So much for the sadness of the thought.

Let us now look for the COMFORT. The comfort lies in this: that, since Life is a SHADOW, there

must be LIGHT (though not directly seen), and REALITY somewhere to make it a Shadow. There must be *something* between our Life and the Light, real and substantial, to cast the shadow which our Life is. If we rest under the shadow of a tree on one of these cloudless days, and look up—we see the tree with its maze of branches and leaves standing up between its shadow and the sunshine above. There never can be a Shadow without its own particular Substance to decide the outlines and give it individual character.

For example, if we were now standing in the shadow of Westminster Abbey, we should look up and see the stately building in all its grand proportions, the graceful tracery of its windows, the magnificent architecture so suitable to a temple of God, rising between us and the sun.* Even so, there is

* I fondly thought that this was an original idea, but truly “there is no new thing under the sun.” I had written the above words, and was speaking of them to a friend, who remarked, “You have borrowed that illustration from ‘Tauler, the preacher,’ in *Hymns for the Household of Faith*.” I quote the lines, never seen till then, which contain a certain similarity of thought:—

“He raised his eyes
O’er broad façade and lofty pediment,
O’er architrave and frieze, and sainted niche,
Up the stone lace-work, chiselled by the wise
Erwin of Steinbach, dizzily up to where,
In the noon brightness, the great minster’s tower,

God in heaven, dwelling in Light which no man can approach unto ; and here is our Life like a Shadow. What is the Substance ?

The Lord Jesus said, "While ye have Light, believe in the Light that ye may be children of Light." How strikingly do these words coincide with our line of thought ! Shadows are "children of Light ;" through all their little life they can only *believe* in the Light, for they can never *see* it, screened always by the intervening Substance. But if they were gifted with sense, could they possibly fail to believe in the source and fountain of their life, without which they must inevitably die ? "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt ?"

We cannot see God, but in Him we live and move and have our being. Lord, increase our faith ! What is the SUBSTANCE ?

St. Peter speaks of our being built up, "a spiritual house ;" St. Paul, of our being "the house

Jewelled with sunbeams on its mural crown,
Rose like a visible prayer. 'Behold !' he said,
'The stranger's faith made plain before mine eyes !
As yonder tower outstretches to the earth,
And casts below its darkened shade alone,
When the clear day is shining on its top,
So darkness in the pathway of man's life
Is but the shadow of God's providence,
By the great Sun of Wisdom cast thereon,
And what is dark below is light in heaven.'"

of Christ;” of our bodies being “temples of the Holy Ghost.” There is the Substance. God is the Light; Christ is the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world: GODLINESS is the SUBSTANCE: CHRISTLIKE HOLINESS is the SUBSTANCE. If we are children of God, servants of Christ, there must be the reality of Godliness and Christlike Holiness to cast the Shadow and define the character of our lives.

If the “temple of God” is within us, the Shadow of our life will be conformed to its image. If, as St. Jude says, we are “building up ourselves upon our most holy faith”—if upon the Rock we are raising the glorious edifice of a holy life, the Lighthouse of St. Peter, with its seven courses of masonry, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity—*then* there will be a Substance and Reality for our Life Shadow which shall never be removed. Then we can look forward to the gloom of the twilight hours without apprehension. We shall never banish entirely the sadness, but in spite of sadness there will be joy.

The lesson to be learnt is—to *know the comfort of the realities*. If our bodies are *not* temples of the Holy Ghost; if the building of a holy life fitly framed together is *not* daily growing unto an holy

temple in the Lord—there can only be the certainty of gloom, vanity and despair. There is absolutely no other alternative.

But if we learn the truth in time, there need be no fear when the sun sets upon our earthly life. The shadow of the Abbey passes away with the setting sun; but the great building is just as real in the darkness of night as in the broad blaze of a summer day. So will the shadow of life pass away, but the *reality* of “the house of Christ,” “the temple of the Holy Ghost” will remain “steadfast, serene, immovable, the same through all the shadows of the silent night”—safe in God’s keeping after the Shadow has melted into the Shade of death and the darkness of the grave. Nothing can destroy the Temple of God, the House in which Jesus Christ was invited to abide. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. His Presence is the security of everlasting continuance. Their labour is not lost who build with God building with them. Seek Him, find Him, follow Him now: constrain Him to abide with you, that when it is toward evening and the day is far spent, you may find Him still THE SAME, with no variableness neither shadow of turning.

The comfort increases as we pursue the thought in another direction. Life is a shadow, but the

realities associated with it can never be shaken or fade. Now we see, as in a glass darkly reflected, the glories that await those faithful unto death. We sing of them in the hymns, and the sound of holy voices by the crystal sea seems to mingle with the music of our song. The great cloud of witnesses, for whom already "life's long shadows have melted in cloudless love," beckon us forward, Those who marched with the Cross their banner. who now cease from their labours in the calm of Paradise the blest, whose works have followed them as the substance of the shadow of their lives—they encourage us to press on. The golden evening has brightened in the west: the night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

God gives us shadows in this life to make us long for the realities of the life beyond. As under the Old Covenant, the Law had a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things; as the sacrifices often repeated spoke of the Sacrifice of Christ to be offered once for all for the sins of the whole world; so now, as we read of the heavenly inheritance, and try to imagine the glories in store, we can call up only

shadows of bliss holy and infinite, hereafter to become realities.

Let us press forward towards the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. Let us be truly in earnest about life; walking circumspectly; praying for God's strength; sincere in the desire to walk in the path of His commandments.

For thus only can we hope for peace at the last, when the vanity of life is proved—in the solemn twilight hour which must bring the conviction that Life is a Shadow which passeth away. Then the only comfort will be, that while we had Light we believed in the Light, that we might be children of Light; and so built up an abiding Temple for God to dwell in, a substance of reality which can never pass away.

X.

THE LAST SUNDAY OF A SUMMER TERM.

LAST Sunday afternoon we sang the 104th Psalm, in which David speaks of God's Majesty; and the Bible lesson on Monday contained the capture of the Ark by the Philistines, and following events. We may trace a connection between the two subjects suitable to this occasion.

The Ark was simply a wooden chest four feet long, two and a half deep and high, overlaid with gold; but its extreme sacredness demands close attention. It represented the Presence of God among His people Israel. If we bear that in mind, everything told us about it is easy to understand. In token of His heavy displeasure against Israel, God had allowed the Ark to fall into the hands of the Philistines, but they could not keep it long. They were compelled by the visitation of a grievous disease to send it back to its

rightful owners. Drawn in a cart by oxen, it came to a field outside the town of Bethshemesh. There it remained, and the people flocked to see it. At first they would look upon it with awe; and then, moved by idle curiosity, some daring hands ventured to touch it. They opened it, and looked into it. What was the consequence? God smote more than fifty thousand men dead for their rashness! One verse in the chapter describes this tremendous punishment. The briefness of the statement is startling: it comes so unexpectedly. All was peaceful and bright before—the labourers reaping the wheat-harvest in the valley; the gladness of rejoicing when the Ark appeared; the sacrifice there in the field. The whole scene is so full of happiness at the prospect of God's blessing and favour once more restored, that the abruptness of the announcement that upwards of fifty thousand persons were struck dead for merely looking into the Ark, is surely very startling, and must be intended to teach some very important truth.

GOD CANNOT TOLERATE WILFUL IRREVERENCE FROM MAN: that is the truth conveyed.

The Ark was the most sacred emblem of God's immediate Presence. He, Who will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain, compelled

the curious and irreverent townspeople to repent their folly. Those who witnessed the fearful retribution, filled with amazement and terror, exclaimed, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

God vindicated His awful and unspeakable Majesty in a way that could not fail to be understood. He exacted reverence from those who otherwise withheld it.

Turning now to the 104th Psalm, we may learn one method of acquiring a proper Reverence for God's magnificent grandeur. The Summer Holidays are before us—that fairest period of the whole year—the prospect of which is so delightful. The summer holidays bring to us a great opportunity for studying the spirit of that Psalm, and learning to appreciate more deeply the truth of those words, "The glorious Majesty of the Lord shall endure for ever."

The Glory of God displayed in Nature is always spread before us, but at school the locality is confined within narrow bounds. In summer this glory wears its most impressive dress, and often the heart sighs for memories of past days spent by mountains and rivers, forests and seas. Once more the summer holidays will bring fresh opportunities for studying the glory of God revealed in Nature. The lower

animals graze with their heads depressed to earth. The sheep and oxen feeding upon the mountains are unmoved by the beauties of the landscape before them. Man alone walks erect, and is gifted with the power of appreciating the excellence of the works of God. Do not despise that power, for it is most important in rousing us to a right reverence for the Majesty of God.

God, Whom we worship, designed and created all the wonders of the universe. Read and learn all you can about these, because the admiration excited by such study compels reverence and worship. Therefore the admiration of Nature is a great stimulating motive towards leading a pure and holy life. The more we study the works of God, the more earnestly must we ask the question, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

Creation shows forth the Majesty, Wisdom, and Power of God. If we wonder at the perfection of the *work*, what shall we think of the *design*? The builders of a Cathedral deserve high honour, but the Architect who designed it deserves the highest praise. The builders did the mechanical part; the architect supplied the inventive genius. God has done both. He alone planned the universe; He alone created and perfected its minutest details.

David teaches us to feel profound admiration for God's magnificence so displayed. He describes God as exceeding glorious—clothed with majesty and honour—decking Himself with light as with a garment—spreading out the heavens like a curtain—laying the beams of His chambers in the waters—making the clouds His chariot—walking upon the wings of the wind. These sublime expressions thrill the soul with awe. Learn to observe the splendid effects of light in sunrise and sunset. Look with admiration upon the deep-blue heavens. Regard the clouds moving across them as the chariots of God, who walketh upon the wings of the wind. God makes the winds His messengers, and the fiery lightning His servant. The air we breathe is purified by continual agitation. Lightning is the visible form of that mighty force Electricity, the mysterious agent universally present, so powerful in working the machinery of life and growth in all things that live. God laid the foundations of the earth when He caused its molten substance to cool and become solid rock, girding the earth with adamantine ribs. He covered it with the deep, as we read in Genesis, and afterwards, at His rebuke, amid the violence of tempests, at the voice of His thunder the mountains rose, the valleys sank—the seas were gathered to

their appointed place, the dry land appeared. God set the waters their bounds that they shall not pass, neither turn again to cover the earth. God sendeth the springs into the rivers which run among the hills.

It is pleasant to wander among the hills on a summer afternoon, following the course of a torrent through fern, and heather, and birches; peering into deep pools; listening to the music of the waters. There is sympathy between our souls and the spirit of Nature, because our God is Nature's God. Mountains and streams present pictures of endless and varied beauty.

God brings forth grass for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men. God causes the trees to grow, wherein the birds make their nests. God appointed the moon for certain seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down. God maketh darkness that it may be night. Wherever we look we read the inscription, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches. So is the great and wide sea also, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts."

Any one visiting the Crystal Palace for the first time must be filled with amazement. He passes

that pillar on which stands a bust of the architect; and he wonders perhaps why some more imposing memorial was not erected. Then he reads the inscription upon the pillar; "If you are searching for a monument, look around," and he recognises the truth. For what grander monument could be devised for the genius of him who planned that building and laid out those grounds, than the building and the grounds themselves? So is it with the works of God. They are the grandest monument of His wisdom and power and majesty and love. They manifest His glory in a way that forbids all question.

God allows all His creatures to participate in the enjoyment of creation, according to their powers and position. Man has the highest powers and the highest position. His enjoyment must not be a merely animal satisfaction, but an intelligent and spiritual delight. We must rejoice in the works of God, and learn from them to appreciate this truth—"the glorious Majesty of the Lord shall endure for ever." And the knowledge of this truth must lead us a step further in the language of the same Psalm; "I will praise my God while I have my being: my joy shall be in the Lord."

God has given you life that you may contribute

towards showing forth His glory. He would see your conduct influenced by reverence for Him and the fear of offending Him. It is not enough to feel admiration for His power and wisdom, unless that admiration leads us to walk in the paths of His commandments. The works of God in Nature, like the Ark, speak of His abiding Presence. It was woe to those who dared to lift up unholy hands upon the Ark: fifty thousand struck dead for their presumption. It is woe to those whose hands deal with wickedness, to him who stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. Fearful punishment broke upon the men of Bethshemesh as suddenly as the terrors of final judgment will overtake the world. Even while they said Peace and safety, sudden destruction came upon them, and they could not escape.

May God in His mercy draw your hearts to Himself, that you may glorify Him in your souls and bodies which are His. Set before you, as a delightful holiday-task, the resolution to open your eyes to observe the works of His hand Who made all things, Who alone preserves us from day to day, Who saveth our life from destruction, and crowneth us with mercy and loving-kindness. Open the ears

of the soul to catch the voices that breathe from mountains, rivers, woods, birds, flowers, light, rain, thunder, wind and cloud. Let every sight and sound in Nature speak to you of God, that His Name may be engraven upon your hearts, that you may know Him to be the only true God. May His blessing be abundantly poured upon you during the coming weeks, that your powers of mind and body may be strengthened and refreshed for new energy in devoting your lives to Him and showing forth His glory.

“Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name.”

Now thank we all our God,
With hearts, and hands, and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices;

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Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours to-day.

O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever-joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us ;
And keep us in His grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
With them in highest heaven,
The One Eternal God
Whom earth and heaven adore,
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore. Amen.

XI.

ARE YOU SAVED?

THERE are many devout Christians who consider it a point of duty to put the above question to friends and acquaintances and strangers. If an affirmative answer is withheld, or qualified by any reserve, they proceed to argue the matter, quoting isolated texts, and emphasising particular words, and putting forth their strength to "convert" their neighbour on the spot.

The following thoughts are strung together with a view to answering one who has addressed to me the questions, *ARE YOU SAVED? ARE YOUR SINS FORGIVEN?*

What is the meaning of the word *SAVED*? $\Sigma\acute{\omega}\zeta\omega$ means, to save, rescue, keep alive, preserve. It is used in the New Testament for rescuing from sin, and rescuing from sickness. The body in a state of disease needs divine power to rescue and restore

it to health; so also, the soul in a state of sin needs divine power to bring it out of that state—to rescue and restore it to health, and keep it in health.

Jesus Christ has power to do both, to save and defend the body, to save and defend the soul.

Sin, as a disease, clings to man on this side of the grave, entailing the penalties of death—"the power of the grave." "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me." The angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." Let me drink abundantly of the water of life, flowing from the virtue of that Name which is above every name. Let me bathe in the cleansing streams poured forth for all. O Jesus, save me from my sins! Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin! Never may that prayer be silent on my lips!

But if you ask me point-blank, ARE YOU SAVED? I confess the question takes me aback. I fancy I do not clearly understand what precise meaning you attach to the word SAVED. I have asked more than one interrogator to explain to me exactly what he means, but have never received a satisfactory answer. Isolated texts have been heaped

upon me, and particular words unfairly emphasised, thereby conveying a forced meaning which does not suit the context or in any way belong to the original Greek. Such dealing with God's Word appears to me shallow and insincere. No isolated text should ever be quoted as an argument, except when there is certainty that it was intended to convey an isolated argument. Most diligent study and caution are necessary before so using any text. I confess your dealing with God's Word reminds me of the Cumean Sibyl, who wrote her mandates on leaves, and arranged them by order in her cave. But when the door was opened, the wind sent the leaves whirling in all directions, and the prophetess never troubled herself to restore them to order. What was the consequence? Men came to consult her, but returned disappointed, and cast reproach upon her name.

Your perfect participle, *SAVED*, signifying absolute completion, is what staggers me. 'Am I already rescued entirely from the whole power of sin, so that it can never more gain any advantage over me? Alas, No! How is it possible? I am surrounded on all sides by temptations, prone to weakness, feeble and frail. The things that I would not—how often I do! I know that I fall often—

that the flesh lusteth against the spirit—that the warfare is still fierce—the strife not yet won. I am still in the very thick of the fight. I am not yet SAVED—not yet brought out of all danger, rescued, preserved. Not yet is the word *σῶσμενος*—it is at the best *σῶζόμενος*. If you would only use the *present* instead of the *perfect* participle, your question would wear a very different aspect.

Christ has brought me light when I sat in darkness and the shadow of death. He guides my feet into the way of peace. He has shown me the strait way that leadeth unto life. And I pray that He may keep me in it; that His indwelling Spirit may never be vexed, grieved, quenched, driven to leave me. Christ is rescuing, keeping, saving, and defending me day by day—bearing with my manifold sins and infirmities: were it otherwise I should have no hope. He is of tender mercy, long-suffering, and of infinite love. May I be united to Him by indissoluble union, for then I shall continue to the end in His safe keeping, as it is written, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. viii. 1, 2).

It appears to me contrary to the spirit of the Bible to press the question, *Are you saved?* I look in vain to find any authority for it. Jesus never asked it—nor St. Paul—nor St. Peter—nor St. James—nor St. John. It seems unnecessary presumption, contrary to Christian humility, to assume the necessity of such a demand. For example, St. Paul's humility on the subject of secured salvation is fully attested. (Phil. iii.) "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. . . . Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended," &c.* Again (1 Cor. ix. 27), "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Again, to Timothy (1 Tim. vi. 12), "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called."

Look at the argument of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. St. Paul writes to them that are *sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*, and

* I remember once arguing from this passage with a most spiritually-minded man. His answer was, that "St. Paul was a man like us, at times weak in faith: whereas Jesus said, He that hath the Son, HATH LIFE." I think this is a fair example of the style of argument generally employed by those who insist upon the questions, "Are you saved? Are your sins forgiven?"

he gives them such exhortations and rebukes as would be out of place to those already saved, their sins being unconditionally forgiven.

Look at the argument in his Epistle to the Ephesians. He writes to the *saints* at Ephesus, *faithful in Christ Jesus, chosen, predestinated unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ*; and he prays for their further enlightenment—beseeches them to *walk worthy of their vocation—to put off the old man*—all of which would be unnecessary if they were already saved from the influence of sin.

So also St. Peter, writing to the elect through sanctification of the Spirit, begotten unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible—*who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation* (what an admirable elucidation of the true doctrine!)—bids them “be sober and *hope to the end for the grace* that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, &c. . . . But the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, *make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*” Such instances might be multiplied; *e.g.*, in his second Epistle he enjoins those who have obtained like precious faith

to build upon it a godly life, to develop those graces which prevent faith being barren and unfruitful. By so doing we make our calling and election sure, and obtain an entrance abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Again, it cannot be necessary to demand of a man that he should openly assert, MY SINS ARE FORGIVEN. Whatever may be his inward feelings on the subject, he need not be obliged to parade them. Jesus Christ teaches us to be always praying "FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES." Surely He did not intend this prayer solely for the unconverted and unpardoned? We rest assured that forgiveness is freely given, but whereas human frailty abounds, there is need for grace continually to abound: we are always needing forgiveness and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. I see nothing in the Bible about *unconditional* forgiveness on this side of death. It is always said or implied, "Go, and sin no more."

My brother, I would ask you, is it consistent with Christian charity to imply that a man is *lost* because he cannot say, "I am *saved*"? What is gained by making this declaration a *sine quâ non*? If it were an indispensable formula, we should surely see it as plainly set forth in the New Testament as the fact that Jesus died to save us.

If you say you draw your doctrine directly from the Bible, I answer: Be it so. I profess to do the same; so does the Unitarian; so does the devil in the temptation of Christ. If you are convinced of the necessity of declaring that you are saved, and your sins are forgiven you—so likewise am I convinced that such a declaration is unbecoming to Christian humility. I would not question your sincerity, or say you were lost, or in any way appear to judge you. And may I not claim the breadth of your Christian charity to abstain even in thought from calling me a lost and unconverted sinner? You could not go against your conscience and say, "I have made a mistake, I am not saved; my sins are not forgiven." No more can I go against my conscience in supposing that a man is lost who hesitates to say, "I am saved; my sins are forgiven."

If I believe that I fervently understand and prize the unspeakable gift of God in providing an atonement for my sins, shall charity denounce me as lost because the divine light of truth affects my spiritual vision in a manner different to its influence upon you? May I not enjoy the divine comfort of St. John xiv. 21, 23, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me;

and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Who can fully estimate the loveliness of these words, or venture to exclude one who rests upon them from the company of the saints, because he cannot see the necessity of a certain subordinate formula? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose soul is stayed on Thee, because He trusteth in Thee."

Therefore, if you press me with the question, "Are you saved?" I am compelled to answer, "No, I cannot say I am saved until my hope of everlasting life is realised in heaven." I take my little boy to see the boat-race: we have to force our way through the crowd: I say to him, "Hold fast to my hand, and you will be all right." He is rather timid, but he holds fast. He does not say "I'm saved!" nor do I insist upon his so saying; but he feels safe enough from his faith in my power and love. What he thinks is, "Father is taking care of me, keeping me safe: I shall be all right." But

he would be foolish to say, "I am brought safely out of all dangers," before we had done with the conflict and turmoil of the crowd.

Is there some hidden chicanery about the word SAVED—some talisman or charm not apparent on the surface, which I fail to see? I may feel SAFE, but surely not yet SAVED, while in the very midst of all the difficulties, dangers, temptations, and perplexities of life.

If a man asserts that he is even now saved, and all his sins (past and future?) forgiven, what further need has he of PRAYER? Can he believe Prayer in any way to be efficacious in his salvation? Is he not guilty of hypocrisy every time he utters the words, FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES?

Have you not known *numerous* cases in which persons professing to be SAVED have fallen into grievous sin—have renounced their profession, like one who being bound by the pledge of Temperance resumes old habits of intemperance? If you answer that they were not really saved, I reply that there is then *danger of misconception* on the subject, and prudence would therefore recommend a humble reticence rather than presumptuous boasting on the subject.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US

FROM EVIL. If I am SAVED, what idle waste of breath is THE LORD'S PRAYER!

To my mind the great objection to your peremptory question is, that by insisting on it you present a barrier to Christian unity; whereas, if a man accepts the fundamental principles of the Christian Faith, our duty is to imitate the Apostles in not imposing upon him a greater burden than he need bear. Varieties of opinion upon minor details may surely be viewed with charity, and not engender offence or controversy.

My notion of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Jesus Christ is painfully narrowed by the idea that He will positively save only those who can say, "My sins are forgiven! I am saved! Hallelujah!" Instead of a boundless ocean of infinite love, I find myself no better off than the Ephraimites, doomed to death at a narrow stream through inability to pronounce Shibboleth. I consider it an outrage to the belief that HE IS THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND. Not so, for by your preaching the scope of salvation is restricted to a class.

I believe the Divine Truth contained in the Bible to be purposely more than one-sided; so that St. John may see most prominently the perfection of

LOVE; St. Paul, of FAITH; St. James, of WORKS; and so forth: the object being to present the Truth in its various aspects and harmonies, so as to suit all who set themselves to study it. No man can grasp the Truth in all its fulness. Like pure sunlight, it is too dazzling for our eyes. Being infinite, it is not to be comprehended by the finite. But when seen through the medium of faith and love the prominent rays are caught, and the light of Truth is sufficient to guide our steps in the way of life. Before God we stand or fall: let us not judge one another.

Would it be an outrage to your feelings to substitute for SAVED the synonyms "kept safe," "preserved," "defended"? I really believe the difficulty would vanish if you accepted the simple meaning of your word, without forcing it as an engine of mighty argument. *E.g.* (Acts ii. 21), "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be kept safe." Our safety depends on constant communication with Christ by the Holy Spirit: (Acts ii. 47), "And the Lord added to the church daily those that were being safely kept, rescued, preserved from Satan's power." (Acts xv. 11) St. Peter says, "We believe that we are being kept safe through

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts xvi. 30, 31), "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (asked in terror and dismay at the earthquake and supposed escape of the prisoners). Here there is no shade of reference to eternal salvation. "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be safely kept, rescued from danger temporal and spiritual."

Though I cannot yet say, I AM SAVED, yet, thank God, I can say that I am KEPT SAFE by faith in Jesus Christ; I am being PRESERVED from DANGERS, RESCUED from the darkness of despair, DEFENDED from all adversity. And I pray continually that these and all other blessings which Jesus died to bring may be poured abundantly upon me during my voyage over the waves of this troublesome world; that hereafter, on reaching the haven where we would be, I may shout forth, HALLELUJAH! I AM SAVED.

Thus, my brother, there is no reason why we should not in heart and soul find mutual rejoicing in the Christmas greeting, CHRIST is born in Bethlehem—whose name is called JESUS, FOR HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS. Let us join hands and bend together before God's footstool to

thank Him without reserve or misunderstanding for this gracious gift of SALVATION. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. xiv. 13).

XII

GATHERING OF EVERY KIND.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind : which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."—*ST. MATTHEW* xiii. 47-48.

I WAS spending a day of the Christmas holidays at a sea-side village in the west. The sea was in that phase described by a Greek poet—"bright with the countless laughter of rippling waves." There were groups of fishermen standing in idle conversation on the beach, when their attention was arrested by a great gathering of gulls over the sea. They knew that this denoted a shoal of fishes, and idleness instantly gave place to energy. A boat was soon launched and rowed for a mile along the shore. One of the crew landed with the net's rope: then the rest rowed out to sea in a wide half-circle, paying out the long folds of the "sean"—the very

word (*σαγήνη*) used by our Lord in the parable. And so, back to shore with the other end of the net's rope. Then followed the laborious process of hauling in the net. It was interesting to watch from the bows of the boat the half-circle of net gradually narrowing into an ellipse; to look down into the blue depths; to try and catch sight of the fish; to imagine the consciousness of captivity beginning to spread among them.

Fishes of divers habits and characters would find themselves strangely brought together—the weak and helpless with the fierce and strong—an intercourse in which various instincts and peculiarities would intermingle in strange contrast. That interval, between the first consciousness of captivity and its consummation, must be a time of conflict and terror, of struggles to escape and wild despair. Never is such a net drawn ashore but many fishes are found to have been maimed and mangled by others during the process; and it would be a fearful sight to contemplate the enactment of such a scene.

But the dark sea kept its secret, and no signs of commotion could be detected until the net was fully drawn in—when they gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away.

The leading thought suggested by the operation, was that which Jesus Christ seems to draw out prominently in the Parable—the GATHERING OF EVERY KIND. The fishes unseen, good and bad intermingled, were in the same net, making progress towards the shore, where a final assortment would be made. Let us dwell particularly upon this thought, and endeavour to deduce its practical teaching.

The Draw-net represents the Kingdom of Heaven—the Church of Christ—the Holy Catholic Church. Cast into the world's sea, it gathers of every kind—good and bad. Sincere and false alike profess the Religion of Jesus Christ. Admitted into the Church at Baptism, they bear Christian names—that seal of brotherhood, impressed on us all alike, which may be marred and broken but cannot be utterly effaced. Sincere and false Christians pass their earthly life side by side, often strangely brought together, enclosed by the meshes of the same net. Christians of every variety of temper and disposition mingle in daily intercourse. The very name is a passport of society. We might shrink from any dealings with a professed unbeliever; but with men of every denomination which names the

Name of Christ, we are frequently brought into contact.

Christ teaches us that this is a divine appointment; and the remembrance of this truth is practically important. It corrects any impression that retirement from the world is desirable for perfecting the holiness of Christianity. It corrects the impression that any exclusive sect can presume to represent the Church of Christ. The great teaching enforced by the Parable, is—that Christ's Church on earth gathers of every kind; and if the love of Christ, deep, fathomless, all-embracing, condescends to gather of every kind—what is man, that he should presume by any hard and fast distinctions to set a compass upon the borders of Christ's Church, to narrow down or exclude?

We are taught that "in the world, but not of it" must be the earthly condition of Christ's true servant. We should pray "not to be taken out of the world, but to be kept from the evil." We should learn the breadth of true Charity. If Christ died for *all*; if God would have *all* come to the knowledge of Salvation; if, of His boundless mercy, He is content to admit into His Church on earth the bad as well as the good, that the pleadings of His Holy Spirit may bear to the uttermost with

rebel hearts—what room is there for man to show impatience, narrow-mindedness, exclusion or selection?

It is the tender mercy and long-suffering of the great Vine-dresser, who will not allow the unfruitful fig-tree to be cut down; but leaves it a little longer that it may have every chance of bearing fruit. Let us beware of interfering in any way with the largeness of God's unfettered mercy.

For there is always a tendency to such interference. In this "gathering of every kind" we must often find ourselves brought into strange intercourse with others. We may have to endure treatment cruel and unjust; there may be seasons of conflict and despair, when indignation exclaims that the adversary "cannot be a Christian to treat us so." What feelings of bitterness and resentment are thus often fostered, to sow the seeds of misery in our lives, and draw lines of care upon the brow. The Parable teaches submission and endurance under such trials. For if the love of Christ is so boundless as to embrace the bad as well as the good; if the mercy of God is so vast that He will not cast out of His Kingdom that which offends until the very last, after every effort has been made—it is not for us, ever, under any provoca-

tion, to break the rule of infinite condescending mercy.

No man can possibly form a true and just estimate of his neighbour. We can only judge after the appearance, which is not a righteous judgment. We should therefore "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart."

It is natural to forget that the tribunal of high justice concerns each man's conscience and his God; and while doing everything in our power to assist others in effecting the truest reconciliation with God, we must beware of usurping a prerogative which belongs only to God the Judge of all.

We have, each one, a life-long duty demanding the full energy of our body and soul. The one important question is, *Shall I be found, on the far eternal shore, to be meet for the vessels of God?* Although we dare not decide in the case of others, whether God knows them to be good or bad; although that question rests with God only—an inscrutable mystery of the sea, whose dark waters entirely conceal the character of the fishes until the net is drawn ashore; yet that question must always be pressing its claim on the attention of each one

for himself. For while the Holy Catholic Church on earth, till time shall be no more, must contain many who are not holy; there is a sacred inner chamber into which only are admitted the Saints of God. Many are called into the Holy Church, but few are chosen as Saints of God. These are they of whom it is written—"Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The Catholic Church on earth embraces many who are not holy; the Communion of Saints concerns only those who are sanctified, made holy by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

Let us bring the matter into its smallest compass, and drive the question fast home, like the nails of the shepherds' tents fastened by the masters of assemblies. THE SAINTS OF GOD MUST BE HOLY, set apart for the Master's service. The *dedication of the heart to God* must be the one overruling aim of our whole life. It must be carried out continually, amid the common round of worldly intercourse. It must run, like a golden thread, through the various tissues of society among which we are interwoven. This dedication implies, in simple language, the acceptance of God's request—"My son, give me

thine heart." It is the continual remembrance of that divine request ; which, being constantly before the mind, forms a medium through which we regard and approach every duty. We may form the habit of meeting every duty with the secret question flashed like a heliographic signal upon the soul—*What would Christ do, if He were in my place?* And if we form this habit, as we form all other habits—by practice—the result will be a daily dedication of self to God, and the perfecting of a saintly life.

It is possible to assure ourselves upon this vital point. We profess our belief in the *Communion of Saints*—a communion depending on close intimacy with God, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is the intimacy of the branches with the vine—of the members with the body ; and the breath of its life is inspired by the Holy Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God ;" led as a little child by his father over difficult ground ; always feeling the hand that guides, and the strength that is made perfect in weakness.

The knowledge of this blessed Communion is not beyond our reach. That, which is a mystery to us in the case of others, is intelligible when referred to

ourselves. For "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God ; and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." This inward communion between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God, is the gracious privilege of God's children. It is the most precious of all earthly possessions, without which none can be in true peace ; for it is the secret of that Peace which Christ left and gave, not as the world giveth. It is the Peace which consists in knowing that we live and move in the fathomless waters of the Love of God, which overspreads His whole creation, and can on no side be avoided, yet is it only understood by those who are washed and sanctified and justified before Him—a Love so vast and mighty, that no powers of things present or things to come can separate His saints from its influence.

Whether we be good or bad, God loves us with an everlasting love. "God loves the sinner, while He hates the sin." "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much

more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

No man, while he lives on earth, can separate himself from the love of God even by the grossest sin. We live and move and float in that love, as the fishes swim in the sea. God punishes a man for sin just as we punish our children—not in hatred but in love. The punishment is a proof of the father's love. It is the immensity of God's love towards man which makes the ingratitude of despising it such an overwhelming and unpardonable sin that God must punish it. We may provoke God to cast us off for ever, because the requirements of justice are as imperative as those of mercy. And it will be known at the latter day how many have wilfully so provoked Him.

Till that time let us in the spirit of true charity leave the question in silent mystery, as a secret of the dark sea. For so long as the day of salvation lasts, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, gathering of every kind. God only knows when it will be full, to be drawn to shore. And then, "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

May the God of everlasting love gather us each one more closely to Himself, and keep us in a life-long dedication to His service. May He fill our souls with fervent charity towards others, and the deepest anxiety for our own eternal salvation.

XIII.

ONE DAY AS A THOUSAND YEARS.

THOSE words of St. Peter (2, iii. 8), "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," point out an infinite difference between the mind of God and the mind of man. With God, Time does not exist. He sees the end from the beginning. There is no difference to Him between one day and a thousand years. The Past and Future are just as clearly before His mind as the Present.

How far otherwise it is with us! To us life is literally *one moment*, and no more. Each stroke of the clock's pendulum sends the Present into the Past. Life is always just so much time as elapses between the passing of the pendulum's disc from right to left and left to right. Each stroke points forward to the Future, of which we know absolutely nothing—and back to the Past, which we can never

recall. By no contrivance can we take hold of a future moment, until those preceding it have gone from us for ever; nor can we call back one moment of the past to improve the way we spent it. Our life is absolutely *one moment*, and no more.

God adds the moments in succession, until the time allotted to us has ebbed away: but its ebbing is estimated by moments, and never can we claim as our own any more than a pendulum's stroke. This is an impressive thought, difficult to grasp, seldom realised: but when attention is drawn to the fact, its remembrance should be of use.

God has existed from all past eternity, and He will continue to exist through all future eternity; and millions of years compared with eternity are less than a grain of dust in comparison with the whole earth. Therefore the longest conceivable time is nothing compared with eternity. God comprehends the ages of past and future time more completely than we can comprehend one moment of the present. Time past, time present, and time future, are alike always before Him.

TIME PAST IS ALWAYS BEFORE THE EYES OF GOD.

Not as we do, does He require by an effort to call to remembrance the events of a past year, and then only remember their indistinct outlines in

connection with a few persons, or perhaps find them forgotten entirely. All things past, with reference to every creature of His hand, are as clear in His remembrance as if they were present. A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday; nay, He knows the most minute incidents, as they concerned every living soul, with infinite clearness; while we often forget the things of yesterday.

There is a striking allegory in one of the story-books.¹ The writer imagines a shadowy land, in which dwell the *shadows of the past*. All the idle words, wicked thoughts, and sinful deeds that men commit, are gathered there, and move about in strange phantom shapes. They do not die as soon as born—they do not perish with the fleeting breath that uttered them, or the vain act that gave them shape; but they pass away to the shadowy land. Their numbers are continually being increased. Every time that an evil lust conceives it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death: and these children of darkness go forth into the shadowy land, upon which God's eye is always fixed. "Thou hast set our misdeeds before Thee, and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." The imagination may picture sad visions of gloom

¹ Under the Sunset, by Bram Stoker, M.A.

and terror with reference to the shadowy land. The "Procession of the dead Past," always moving before the eyes of God—what a solemn thought! Each one of us has his particular representatives there, waiting to rise up and bear witness against us at God's bidding. Sometimes even now they intrude upon the soul to disturb its peace. There are times when the remembrance of past weakness and folly and sin calls up phantoms of the past.

Now, if we thoroughly realise the solemnity of this thought, that God never can forget the past, but always sees what we have said and done as if the words and deeds were solid shapes hewn out of stone—the question must arise, "Can I never escape from these awful shadows? Must they always haunt my footsteps as the Furies haunted Orestes in the classic myth? Can I never escape them?" Such a question should be of grave interest, and its answer should be eagerly awaited.

There is one way to escape—by *REPENTANCE*.

Repentance is "a change of mind, followed by a change of conduct." Jesus explained it by the parable of a man who had two sons, whom he told to go work in his vineyard. One said he would, but never did. The other said he would not, but

afterwards repented and went. And that son did his father's will.

It is possible for every one to consider the things that are past ; to call up the dead shadows and understand their terror, and resolve henceforth by God's help not to add to their number. And if such a resolve is sincerely made, with constant prayer for strength to carry it out—then Repentance comes and sweeps into oblivion the shadows of the dead past, so that they shall not disturb our peace any more.

Day by day we walk along the shore that borders the ocean of eternity, leaving footprints in the sand. God says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee ; ponder the path of thy feet : turn not to the right hand nor to the left." He bids us walk in a straight line. Ah, but it is almost impossible to fulfil that command. In actual walking it is difficult to go any distance without swerving from a straight course. A path made across a field by people continually walking that way is never straight ; the footprints of persons walking on the sand of the sea-shore never present a straight line.

So, when God commands us to turn not to the right hand nor to the left in keeping the path of

life straight along the sands of time—who is there able to fulfil the command? If we pause and look back, we are sure to see that the way has been crooked, the steps froward; and if the sight of such defect brings a pang of true remorse, and a fervent determination to walk more carefully the rest of the way, keeping the eyes fixed more steadfastly upon the goal of heaven, like one who ploughs the first furrow of a field—then, even as we gaze with sorrow upon the footprints of the past,¹ there comes a great wave from the ocean of God's love, and sweeps over the sands of the past, and blots out the remembrance of erring steps, and the surface of the past is smooth. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." It is by Repentance that God gives remission of sins. The father loved the son who, after refusing to obey, stopped—and looked back—and thought over his waywardness—changed his mind—repented, and did what he was bidden.

There is another very beautiful fancy relating to the subject, which represents each one of us attended on the daily path of life by two Recording Angels.

¹ This striking metaphor was employed at a tent-meeting at Valley End, near Chobham, by Captain Baring. I quote from hearsay, and possibly may not have used it in the same application as its author.

The Angel of good deeds writes upon a page of his book, in characters of gold that shall never fade, every thought, word, and deed that is precious in God's sight. The Angel of evil deeds likewise enters in his book, in black letters, everything that offends God. This book is kept open till the sun has set; and if before that moment there is one sigh or tear of true repentance, the writing grows faint and fades, and the Angel returns to God with the book—its page being free from any record against us.

“ Not yet, not yet
 Is the red sun wholly set,
 But evermore recedes,
 While open still I bear
 The Book of Evil Deeds,
 To let the breathings of the upper air
 Visit its pages, and erase
 The records from its face !
 Fainter and fainter as I gaze
 In the broad blaze
 The glimmering landscape shines,
 And below me the black river
 Is hidden by wreaths of vapour !
 Fainter and fainter the black lines
 Begin to quiver
 Along the whitening surface of the paper ;
 Shade after shade
 The terrible words grow faint and fade,
 And in their place
 Runs a white space ! ”

Solemn is the thought that God's eye is upon the Past; nor less solemn the thought that Time Future is always before Him. He declareth the end from the beginning. He knows all the small incidents—the troubles, difficulties, sicknesses, accidents, helps and encouragements that will befall us in completing the remainder of our lives. He knows whether we shall so live, as not to come short of salvation. The whole trial of our life, whereby Faith must be proved, is present before Him, just as if it were all happening now. God knows our necessities before we ask: He knows our ignorance in asking—how impossible it often is for us to form a right judgment upon the events of life. He teaches us gradually that all things work together for good to them that love Him. Life's incidents are not like loose pebbles on the beach with no mutual connection; rather are they like the stones in a building, cemented together to make the building one; and often a stone of stumbling, an incident over which at the time we trip, is exalted to a place of honour in maintaining the stability of the building.

The text should make us dread to give God cause for displeasure, seeing that our secret sins stand out in the light before His eyes. It should

also bring comfort, and prevail to strengthen our faith in Him; seeing that He knows the end from the beginning, and orders every incident of life.

“A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is passed, and as a watch in the night.” What then is our life in God’s sight?—less than a tenth part of a night-watch! the briefest portion of a time which passes from us in all unconsciousness, in a phase of death the twin-brother of sleep. Such is the littleness of our life.

Yet, on the other hand, to Him “one day is as a thousand years;” and therefore, the small span of our life can be extended in His sight to such extreme length that every moment becomes magnified into importance. The shortness of life does not make it insignificant in God’s sight; we cannot dare to waste its moments. One day of it, to Him as a thousand years! What mighty events have happened during the last thousand years—the whole history of England from its very dawn is almost contained in that period! Each day of our life is as that period in God’s sight.

Surely we should learn the importance of each day from such a thought; and pray God to teach us to number our days—to weigh them and

jealously consider each one as served out to us for the most careful use. If the very hairs of our head are all numbered, nothing however trivial can be beneath His notice. From a Past without beginning, to a Future without end, He is God, infinite in mercy and love. May we make it our highest aim to deserve that mercy and love during the atom of time allotted as our life. For if we do not waste the opportunities, this brief life will prove to have been the preparation for life everlasting, when time shall be no more.

My life's brief remnant all be Thine:
And when Thy sure decree
Bids me this fleeting breath resign,
Oh speed my soul to Thee!

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